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THESIS

EXPLAINING DOMESTIC INPUTS TO ISRAELI FOREIGN AND PALESTINIAN POLICY: POLITICS, MILITARY, SOCIETY

by

Jamie Bartz

December 2004

Thesis Advisor: Barak A. Salmoni
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13. ABSTRACT

Advancing the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians is of great interest to the United States. To this aim, an understanding of the main factors involved in Israel's foreign policymaking is needed. This thesis shows internal pressures are most significant and assesses the influence of domestic access points to Israel's Palestinian policy. For a complete and current analysis of Israel's policymaking process three areas are discussed. First are the fundamentals that makeup Israel's political system such as the Knesset, political parties, ruling coalition, and prime minister. Second is the role of the Israeli Defense Force and the balance in civil-military relations. Third is the mixture of players that color Israel's societal landscape including subcultures, interest groups, and public opinion. The key finding is a combined ranking of the most important domestic forces driving Israel's Palestinian policy formation in all three areas.

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EXPLAINING DOMESTIC INPUTS TO ISRAELI FOREIGN AND PALESTINIAN POLICY: POLITICS, MILITARY, SOCIETY

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.   INTRODUCTION

In late October 2004, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon won a significant victory with the 67 to 45 Knesset vote endorsing his unilateral Disengagement Plan from Gaza and parts of the West Bank. It was a monumental step forward in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. For the first time since Israel captured the West Bank and Gaza in the 1967 war, the Knesset approved a plan to evacuate and destroy Jewish settlements in these territories.[1] However, the issue simultaneously reaped serious havoc in Israeli society and politics. One political science professor at Hebrew University of Jerusalem described the event as "the most dramatic, head-on confrontation in years between ideology and reality, between the messianic ideology of the Israeli right and the pragmatic considerations of the state of Israel in its relations with the Palestinians."[2] As a result Sharon is now in a fight for his very political survival and the threat of civil war looms over Israel.

Before the vote, Sharon told the Knesset "of the security dangers facing Israel, and of the demographic threat that ruling over millions of Palestinians 'who double their numbers every generation' is posing to Israeli democracy."[3] While he spoke those words, around 17,000 demonstrators, mostly settlers, protested outside the Knesset--many labeling Sharon a traitor. Furthermore, Ultra-Orthodox rabbis have urged soldiers to disobey orders to evacuate settlements, leading to potential complications in civil-military relations. [4] Meanwhile, polls show two-thirds of the Israeli public support the disengagement plan.

The vote divided the ruling Likud party, with 23 members voting for the disengagement plan and 17 against it.[5] Most of Sharon's traditional allies in ultranationalist and religious parties deserted him and all four Arab Knesset Members

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[1] "Sharon Scores a Victory But Risks a Mutiny," *The Economist,* (October 27, 2004). http://www.economist.com/agenda/PrinterFriendly.cfm?Story_ID=3326785, October 2004
[2] John Ward Anderson, "Sharon Wins Vote for Gaza Pullout," Washingtonpost.com, (October 27, 2004) http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A64391-2004Oct26?language=printer, October 2004
[3] "Sharon Scores a Victory But Risks a Mutiny"
[4] John Ward Anderson, "Sharon Wins Vote for Gaza Pullout"
[5] "Sharon Scores a Victory But Risks a Mutiny"

abstained.[6] Immediately following the vote four key Likud ministers issued Sharon an ultimatum, lead by his rival Binyamin Netanyahu, to hold a national referendum on the pull-out within two weeks. The right-wing National Religious Party is also demanding the referendum or they will bolt from the coalition, leaving Sharon with an unstable minority. Sharon told the Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz, "I am opposed (to the referendum) because it will lead to terrible tensions and a rupture in the public." Most Likud factions are also against holding a national referendum, as are Labor and Shinui, the second and third largest parties in the Knesset respectively. [7]

The premier's challenge is to find a political formula that allows him to stay in power--and implement his plan. With crucial votes and deadlines hanging in the balance on both Gaza and the national budget, Sharon must choose between three unappealing options. First, he can concede to the pressure and hold a referendum. The concern is that not only would a referendum delay the pull-out, but he may find he is unhappy with the result. Second, he could call for early elections, but that could lead to his demise. Netanyahu has been maneuvering to oust Sharon and could pull it off. Plus, Likud members already voted against Sharon's plan earlier this year, likely decreasing his constituency base. The last option is to invite the Labor party into the coalition. Still, it is unlikely Likud will approve such a move, and even if it did, it would stir up trouble given Labor criticisms of economic policy.[8]

This thesis will show that the weight of domestic factors is overwhelmingly important in the case of Israel's foreign policy regarding the Palestinians. For the purpose of this thesis, Palestinian policy is meant to include: peace negotiations, Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, military occupation of the territories, and establishment of a Palestinian state. It does not refer to issues such as: the security fence, assassination of terrorist leadership, status of Jerusalem, or right of return. In a democracy such as Israel, domestic influence on policy is monumental--as the above scene setter of current Israeli affairs illustrates. This thesis will identify and assess the magnitude of domestic access points to foreign policymaking in Israel.

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[6] John Ward Anderson, "Sharon Wins Vote for Gaza Pullout"
[7] "Likud Referendum Panel to Submit Recommendations Within 14 Days," *Ha'aretz,* (October 27, 2004) http://www.haaretzdaily.com/hansen/objects/pages/PrintArticleEn.jhtml?itemNo=493903, October 2004
[8] "Sharon Scores a Victory But Risks a Mutiny"

Since the signing of the Oslo accords in 1993, international dynamics have changed impacting the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and U.S. goals in the Middle East.[9] The primary American interest in the region shifted after the end of the Cold War from Soviet containment to promoting stability and checking rogue states. The ongoing violence between Israel and the Palestinians is a destabilizing force in the Middle East. Peace between these two parties therefore is of great relevance and interest to the United States. After the September 11th, 2001 terrorist attacks on American soil the Bush Administration also revived its focus on the peace process to gain support for the global war on terror in the Arab world.

Given peace treaties with neighboring Egypt and Jordan and the toppling of Saddam Hussein, the post-Oslo era comes with a new Israeli threat assessment. A monolithic wall of Arab military powers no longer threatens Israel. Consequently there is a lack of consensus in opinion on foreign policy, therein domestic inputs have become more important in the decisionmaking process. The only real and current threat to Israel is the Palestinians. Current Israeli Defense Force Chief of Staff, Lt.-Gen. Moshe Ya'alon, described the situation this way: "the conflict with the Palestinians constitutes an 'existential' and 'cancerous' threat to Israel, a threat more serious than anything Israel has faced since the 1948 war of independence."[10]

This thesis is significant because it is insufficient to only be aware of Israel's security needs, what the political leadership wants, and the government's ideology. There is more; domestic components of foreign policy formation fill out the picture. Without examining these domestic influences one cannot grasp the politics of the possible.

Israel is a small, yet intensely populated political space where subcultures link into interest groups, which link into political parties, which involve retired military

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[9] The Oslo Accords refer to letters between Chairman Yasir Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, as well as the signing of the Declaration of Principles between the Israeli government and the Palestinian Liberation Organization in 1993. They resulted from a series of negotiations laying out a path to peace in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This was the first time the PLO and Israel recognized each other. Issues handled were Palestinian self-rule, security arrangements, Palestinian elections, and an interim period before a permanent status settlement. However the continuing tit-for-tat attacks between the Palestinians and Israelis have left the Oslo Accords ineffective at establishing a peace.

[10] Clive Jones, "One Size Fits All: Israel, Intelligence, and the al-Aqsa Intifada," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 26:273-288 (2003): 277. http://polisci.taylorandfrancis.com/pdfs/ter/julyaug03_jones.pdf

members, and so on. A great deal of overlapping between elements exists within Israel that makes it difficult to separate them out in analysis, however this thesis will discuss these various aspects in as organized a manner as possible.

There is no contemporary comprehensive assessment of domestic influences on Israel's Palestinian policy. Therefore, through the following methodology, this thesis will do just that. Each chapter will focus on one of the three main areas of domestic influence in Israel: the political system, civil-military relations, and society.

Chapter II will analyze the elements that define the Israeli political arena. Unlike the United States, Israel has a plethora of political parties. Likud and Labor are the largest vote winners yet have never gained enough electoral support to rule the government independently. Small parties, usually religious, have an enormous amount of political power due to the coalition structure in Israeli government. The prime minister is the executive and has a prominent role in decision-making as the figurehead directing the political agenda. However, even the premier's policies are subject to Knesset approval. Electoral reform in the 1990s had a considerable effect on Israeli politics and trends will be examined in light of their impact on foreign policy today. All these aspects will be discussed in terms of direct access points to Israel's foreign policy formation.

The third chapter focuses on the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) and civil-military relations. A look at the defense establishment and foreign ministry will show that national security dominates Israel's behavior and therein is the top priority in determining foreign policy. Militarism and military service in Israel illustrate how the military permeates Israeli collectiveness and therefore the IDF is a domestic constituency every Israeli leader must take into account. Palestinian policy preferences within the defense establishment as well as the role of religion in military service give bearing on applicability to foreign policy inputs. Retired senior officers carry a great deal of influence in government as many pursue political careers after they hang up their uniform. Civil-military relations in Israel are closely knit while the military has increasingly enlarged its profile in the partnership. Evidence of possible instances where the IDF has taken Palestinian policy in their own hands will be explored. More recently Israeli civil-military relations have indicated conflict over foreign policy, which directly impacts Palestinian related issues.

Chapter IV delves into the various entities that make up Israeli society. Israel is by no stretch a homogenous society. There is an internal debate in Israel over national identity with diverse groups trying to make their definition the rule. Different communal or ethnic groups make up the societal landscape. Multiple subcultures, often differentiated by religious preferences, also represent factions with potential access to the government's decisionmaking process. Interest groups advocating opposing positions in foreign affairs are highly active in lobbying the government. Each of these groups has diverse views on how the State should approach the peace process with the Palestinians. Every elected leader at some point will be held accountable to public opinion. Studies on Israeli opinion show the majority favor peace with the Palestinians over continued conflict. Additionally the media plays an interesting role in foreign policy by forming how issues are relayed to society and therefore can have a positive or negative impact on the support for certain policies.

All the aspects discussed in the previous chapters play part to some extent in determining Israel's Palestinian policy. The conclusion chapter will compare these topics and rank them in order of importance. Given the evaluation, recommendations will be made for what--if anything--the U.S. can do in its relationship with Israel to further the peace process with the Palestinians.

Ultimately, more important than simply applying international relations theories of Realism or the Two-Level game, is to grasp domestic aspects in Israel.[11] Other theories such as constructivism and bureaucratic politics account for domestic factors that drive government actions, but similarly, by themselves do not provide a complete

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[11] Realism is a paradigm based on some of the following assumptions: the international arena is anarchic and consists of independent political states; states are the primary actors and wield some offensive military capability or power; the primary motive driving states is survival or maximization of power; and states are interest seeking rational actors. See Hans Morgenthau, "Politics Among Nations; The Struggle for Power and Peace," (Random House, 1972). Robert Putnam's Two-Level Game theory asserts that negotiations are complex and most states must pursue two levels of bargaining simultaneously: international bargaining between states, and between the state's negotiators and its various domestic constituencies. See Robert D. Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of 2-Level Games." *International Organization* 42:3 (Summer 1988): 427-469.

explanation of Israeli foreign policy.[12] This thesis will show how formation of Israel's policy regarding the Palestinians results largely from certain domestic pressures. Key points of influence that one must recognize because of their prominence in this respect are: the prime minister, smaller political parties, coalition politics, the role of the IDF as a constituency as well as advisor to and implementer of foreign policy, the balance in civil-military relations, certain societal subcultures, and interest groups.

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[12] The main theoretical principle of Constructivism is that a state's behavior is shaped by elite beliefs, collective norms, and social identities. Constructivists are interested in current and predominant public discourse because it shapes those beliefs, norms, and identities. See Stephen M. Walt, "International Relations: One World, Many Theories" (*Foreign Policy*, Spring 1998). Bureaucratic politics theory espouses that government policy is not made by a single decisionmaker, but a combination of junior and senior players who often disagree about what the government should due in a particular policy area and compete to influence government policy. Senior players are major political actors, the military, and in some cases the body controlling government purse strings. Junior players consist of the media, interest groups, other members of parliament, and the public. These junior players form concentric circles around the senior players, which define the boundaries in which the government operates. Democratic government systems are subject to the approval of--and pressure from--the wider circles of individuals that force senior players to accommodate their policy interests. See Graham T. Allison and Morton H. Halperin, "Bureaucratic Politics: A Paradigm and Some Policy Implications." *World Politics*, Vol. 24 (Spring, 1972), 40-79.

II. POLITICS

In 1995, the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin by a right-wing extremist was followed by an outpouring of sympathy in Israeli society for his efforts towards peace with the Palestinians and a desire to continue in his foreign policy quest. Rabin's successor, Prime Minister Shimon Peres, was then attacked by a political rival as being too soft on security (coming from a non-military background) and even being pro-Arab.[13] To defend his image and bolster his political standing, Peres implemented a very aggressive and militant policy towards the Palestinians. Still, by 1996 more Israelis had been killed in the previous three years at the hands of Palestinians than in 15 years combined before Oslo was signed.[14] The theme in domestic Israeli politics shifted to maintaining national security, bringing about the election of a hard-line government which rejected Oslo's legitimacy and premise, while also signaling it would not honor informal commitments on the Israeli-Syrian peace track. All these examples have one theme in common: domestic political battles or political perception strongly influenced foreign policy outcomes.

This chapter will dissect the specifics of the Israeli government structure to show the access points for domestic influence on foreign policymaking, specifically in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The electorate, political parties, the prime minister, Knesset, and coalitions, are all actors--some more prominent than others--on the Israeli political scene. Voters determine the clout of political parties, composition of the Knesset, and selection of the prime minister – who then forms a coalition based upon a policy strategy or need to accommodate coalition members. Electoral reform in the 1990s produced trends that became an important issue in domestic politics by affecting these different persons or institutions.

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[13] Joel Peters, "Under Netanyahu: The Current Situation in Israeli Politics," *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (January 1997): 2.

[14] Clive Jones and Emma C. Murphy, *Israel: Challenges to Identity, Democracy, and the State*, (London: Routledge, 2002), 112.

A. VOTING PARTICIPATION AND ISSUE VOTING

As a democracy, the public is crucial to the Israeli system of government. Israeli voters embody one very valuable resource -- numbers.[15] Voting participation in Israel is among the highest in the world, close to 80% of the eligible voters voluntarily go to the ballot box on election day. Since the 1980s, data attests issue voting has grown significantly more important. Specifically, the issue of the future of the territories has become exceedingly influential. In 1996, 71% of Israeli respondents said that the issue of the territories would greatly influence their vote, an increase of 20% since 1992.[16] And in 1999, one's vote for prime minister rested largely on their attitude towards negotiations with the Palestinians.[17]

B. POLITICAL PARTIES

Political parties in Israel are dependent on electoral outcomes. Each party's number of seats in the Knesset is directly proportional to the number of votes they win. In Israel's government system, political parties play a crucial part in policy formation if included in the government. The leanings of political parties define how Israeli national identity is expressed by the government and in turn how that identity relates to policy regarding the Palestinians. There are a few clear instances to illustrate the influence political parties have on the policymaking process. One was in May of 2004 when Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's Gaza disengagement plan was defeated in a vote by his own party, Likud. This resulted in a halt of all policy as Sharon had to scramble to try and rally enough support to move forward with his plan, even a watered-down version. This then leads to the second example, when Sharon contemplated bringing Labor into the coalition to garner enough votes to push the policy of disengagement through. However, again, his own political party voted in August 2004, against allowing the centrist Labor into the government. To add insult to injury, Likud additionally denied Sharon's request

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[15] Asher Arian, *The Second Republic: Politics in Israel*, (Chatham, N.J.: Chatham House Publishers, 1997), 74.

[16] Ibid., 222.

[17] Barry Rubin, ed., "Special Report: Analysis of the Israeli Elections," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* Issue 7 (June 1999). http://www.biu.ac.il/Besa/meria/research-g/israeli-elections.html

to pursue coalition negotiations "with any Zionist party" in his efforts to regain his lost majority in the Knesset.[18]

The two major parties in Israel, Labor and Likud, can be compared on particular aspects of foreign policy. Depending which is the main party in power (and which party the prime minister hails from), certain government behavior can be anticipated. In regards to land claims based on religion verses security, Labor does not utilize reference to religious rights of the West Bank or Gaza and prefers to justify settlements in terms of national security. Whereas, with Likud security is certainly important, however legitimacy for the settlements is based on Jews' historic and religious rights to the land.[19] The approach to policy regarding the territories is therefore a distinguishing feature between Labor and Likud recognized by Israelis. Labor articulates the position that Israel can be sustained without the territories and is more willing to use them as a bargaining chip for progress towards coexistence. Likud mainly however, stakes their position of the territories on the idea of redemption, survival through continued Jewish military superiority, and a duty to settle the whole land of Israel -- territories included.

C.   THE PRIME MINISTER

If one person were to be considered the most influential in Israel's policymaking, it is the prime minister. Each prime minister since Oslo has had to contend with the substantial domestic challenges confronting Israel. The Zionist ethos that was so strong in the early life of Israel has lost much of its appeal among wider society today. There is also a declining willingness to serve in the military, once unthinkable. Furthermore the divide between secular and religious Jews has been widening. These three factors have heightened tensions in Israel. Therefore, premiers have had to navigate all these issues when forming foreign policy with the Palestinians.

The prime minister is head of the executive branch, the cabinet, their party, and the ruling coalition.[20] "While they may share power with party allies and coalition

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[18] Molly Moore and John Ward Anderson, "Sharon, Arafat Face Challenges in Ranks." Washingtonpost.com August 19, 2004.

[19] Fred Gottheil, "Demographic and Economic Forces Underlining Likud's Perspective of the West Bank," in Bernard Reich and Kieval R. Gershon, eds. *Israeli Politics in the 1990s: Key Domestic and Foreign Policy Factors,* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991.), 134-5.

[20] Asher Arian, *Executive Governance in Israel*, (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 35.

partners, the agenda is there to be set by prime ministers."[21] As an elected official, the prime minister is driven by three main concerns: political, public, and those involving legitimacy.

The main political consideration of a prime minister is that they "are only as strong as they can force their colleagues to let them be."[22] Therefore, bureaucratic politics is likely to be a sizeable investment of the prime minister. He is conscious to keep, and if possible, enhance his political clout.[23] He is also aware that others, both within and outside his party, covet his position and will jockey to steal it. Often, these domestic players interfere in foreign policymaking at crucial junctures. There are several illustrations where former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, also of Likud, was a thorn in the side of Sharon during his efforts to move forward in the peace process. In May 2002, Netanyahu convinced the Likud Central Committee to vote against the possibility of the formation of a Palestinian state in negotiations. This was however, over Sharon's strong objection, which was ready to make the costly concession as part of negotiations.[24] Then, leading up to the Likud vote on Sharon's Disengagement Plan in May of 2004, Netanyahu spoke out strongly against Sharon's policy plan to try and bolster support for his own political aspirations. Although Netanyahu finally supported the plan at the last minute, his earlier arguments may have had lingering effects as the plan was still rejected by Sharon's party.

Then later, as Sharon attempted to bring a scaled back version of his Gaza disengagement plan to the cabinet for a vote, Netanyahu declared he would strongly object any proposal by the prime minister unless is mirrored his own vision for evacuation of the settlements. Many involved in Israeli politics saw this purely as a political ploy by Netanyahu to make matters more difficult for Sharon and undermine his political authority. In other words, wrangling for power within the domestic political arena often drives foreign policy actions. Therefore, the prime minister must keep these behind-the-scenes political considerations in mind as he orchestrates political maneuvers.

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[21] Ibid., 35.

[22] Ibid., 59.

[23] Asher Arian, *The Second Republic: Politics in Israel*, 16.

[24] Cameron S. Brown, "Israel's 2003 Elections: A Victory for the Moderate Right and Secular Center," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* Volume 7, No. 1 (March 2003). http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/2003/issue1/jv7n1a7.html

Prime Minister Ehud Barak did so in 1999 when he formed his government—and foreign policy approaches. He was careful to place potential rivals like Shimon Peres, and Yossi Beilin, in posts where they would not have too much influence on policy regarding the peace process.[25]

Since the people elect the prime minister, his second major consideration is the public. More recently in Israel, this has called for the prime minister giving the perception the peace process is healthy. If voters decide the prime minister is not bringing the best results possible, they relieve him. This is what happened when voters decided that Peres was too weak on security issues and Netanyahu was not trying enough to move forward in the peace process.[26] Barak was so concerned the Israeli public would think he went too far in offering concessions to the Palestinians at Camp David II, that he "asked if President Clinton could say something that might help him back home."[27]

Therefore, miscalculation of public opinion, inadequate attention given to the demands of major groups, or those concerning marginal groups can all be politically dangerous.[28] Peres found out just how crucial popular support is to the prime minister in the 1996 election and serves as an ideal example of how domestic factors indeed influence the government. At the time, the immigrants from the former Soviet Union comprised 13% of the Israeli electorate. In 1996 they embodied an extreme feeling of dissatisfaction that the state had not done enough to improve their situation. Therefore the Russian immigrants, driven by discontent, reacted with a voter backlash against the incumbent. The opponent, Netanyahu, won the election by such a narrow margin it proved the communal vote to be decisive.[29] To reiterate, domestic needs drive foreign policy.

The third consideration requiring energy of the prime minister in regards to policymaking is gaining legitimacy. Since the benefits of peace could come at the cost of territory, security, settlements, and ideology, the prime minister must obtain ample

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[25] Myron J. Aronoff, "The Americanization of Israeli Politics and Realignment of the Party System," *Israel Studies* 5:1 (2000), 106.

[26] Cameron S. Brown, "Israel's 2003 Elections: A Victory for the Moderate Right and Secular Center."

[27] William B Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israel Conflict Since 1967*, (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), 367.

[28] Asher Arian, *The Second Republic: Politics in Israel,* 143.

[29] Zvi Gitelman and Ken Goldstein, "The 'Russian' Revolution in Israeli Politics," in Asher Arian and Michal Shamir, eds., *The Elections in Israel 1999* (SUNY, 2002), 143.

legitimacy for peace policy initiatives.[30] Given the lack of consensus in Israel over the value and means of achieving peace, building legitimacy for policy is necessary for effective formulation and implementation of policy regarding the Palestinians. This in turn should encourage the prime minister's confidence in pursuing such a policy and enhancing their track record on the peace process.[31]

However, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and then Foreign Minister Shimon Peres did not heed this lesson. They failed to recognize the magnitude of the resistance towards the Oslo negotiations with the Palestinians. Hence, they fell short in conveying to opposition parties, right-wing interest groups--including all the settlers, and the majority of the public, the benefits, necessity, timeliness, and value of their peace plan. At the same time, they dropped the ball when it came to showing that a sincere peace was developing, clarifying the final objectives of the peace policy, and how it would be implemented. A more successful policy implementation might have established broader legitimacy for the Oslo accords with better management of the opposition.[32] Recent Israeli political history suggests that prime ministers cannot balance foreign policymaking and execution with domestic survival needs.

D.   THE KNESSET

Another player on the Israeli political stage is the Knesset. The Knesset is a single chamber legislature of 120 members, the composition of which is determined by elections. The Knesset provides two access points in the policymaking process. The first, are the debates held in the Knesset over defense and settlement policy. In this environment Knesset members have the potential to directly influence decisionmakers. However, in actuality, this access is often limited since government members' attendance is irregular. Since the senior key players in government decisionmaking choose not to sit in on most Knesset debates, it is not a strong access point to Israel's foreign behavior. Hence, influence on policy is more limited to those Knesset members included in the ruling coalition and their Cabinet representatives, rather than in Knesset debates. What real influence the Knesset has is perhaps indirect. Debates on foreign policy are

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[30] Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov, "Peace-Making with the Palestinians: Change and Legitimacy." In *From Rabin to Netanyahu: Israel's Troubled Agenda,* ed. Efraim Karsh (London: Frank Cass, 1997), 170.
[31] Ibid., 174.
[32] Ibid., 175.

frequently televised and have the ability to shape public opinion, and thus impact policy resulting from discussion generated on defense, security, and settlement issues.[33]

The relationship between the legislative body and chief executive in Israel has been described as a 'balance of terror.' Each have the authority under direct election rules to dismiss each other over a policy face-off. The prime minister can dissolve the Knesset with agreement from the president. Or, the Knesset can dismiss the prime minister through a no-confidence vote by 61 seats in the Knesset, or by failing to approve the budget within three months after its submission.[34] Prime ministers in Israel are keenly aware of this threat. Domestic political survival more heavily tempers foreign policy moves when: the budget approval is near, if ousting of the prime minister is a possibility through a no-confidence vote, or the Knesset fears the premier might try to dissolve it in hopes of gaining a more agreeable legislative branch after new elections. After Sharon continued to bring his Gaza disengagement plan to a vote in the cabinet, many members in the Likud felt betrayed by their party leader. Yifrah Shalom, chairman of Likud's representation in the Gaza Coast Regional Council warned of the political repercussions, "If Sharon insists, we will either go to the polls or have to replace the chairman."[35] A new norm appears to have been set in the relationship between the legislative and the executive as well. While it is not written into Israel's basic laws for the government to submit peace policies to the Knesset, a precedent has emerged. Since Olso, the government is expected to bring peace agreements before the Knesset for approval as a result of the precedent set from Camp David, 1979-1981.[36]

E.   COALITIONS

A vital participant in the Israeli government system is the coalition, and its composition determines peace process potential. Shortly after they are elected, prime ministers set to work on designing their government. In Israel this means fashioning a coalition since there has never been a sole party that has won enough Knesset seats for a 61 member majority. Payoffs in coalition politics are substantial and therefore coalition

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[33] R. D. McLaurin, *Foreign Policy Making in the Middle East: Domestic Influences on Policy in Egypt, Iraq, Israel, and Syria*, (New York: Praeger, 1977), 193.
[34] Asher Arian, *Executive Governance in Israel,* 38.
[35] Nadev Shragai, "Likud: Honor Results of the Referendum." *Ha'aretz*, (May, 28, 2004). http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/objects/pages/PrintArticleEn.jhtml?itemNo=432462, September 2004.
[36] Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov, "Peace-Making with the Palestinians: Change and Legitimacy," 174.

negotiations are quite competitive. Many matters are bargained over during the coalition formation process, policy being a prominent one. Each prime minister has a vision for the kind of policy he wishes to pursue regarding the Palestinians, and is aware he must choose coalition partners that will allow him to pursue those objectives. Or his coalition choices and desire to stay in power constrain the range of objectives the premier can pursue.

This was demonstrated when Rabin, leader of the Labor alignment, won the 1992 election in a strong enough position to create a center-left coalition without including any right-wing or religious parties. Rabin's vision for Israel was tied to moving forward in the peace process. Rabin appealed to domestic concerns to amplify support for his foreign policy goals. He saw withdrawal from the territories, not only as enhancing Israel's long-term security, but beneficial for the economy and society as a whole. The coalition Rabin selected agreed withdrawal would allow for reallocation of financial recourses to social welfare, develop an environment friendly to foreign investment, and integration of Israel into the global economy.[37] As a result, it was this government that signed the Oslo accords in 1993, marking one of the most significant milestones to date in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Prime Minister Barak also drove coalition formation by his quest of achieving a certain foreign policy. Barak wanted a broad coalition that would provide a strong foundation for a peace agreement with the Palestinians. Given the strength and position of his own Labor party, Barak had to decide between inviting Shas or Likud into his coalition after his victory in the 1999 election. Shas would most likely follow the prime minister's lead on foreign policy initiatives, though could possibly cause domestic social and political strife. Yet, Likud would pose fewer obstacles in social, economic, or religious issues, but would certainly try to thwart the premier in Palestinian policy. Ultimately, Barak weighed what was most important to him and chose Shas for their influence and support on the peace process.[38] In other words, foreign policy trumped the

[37] Michael Barnett, "The Israeli Identity and the Peace Process: Re/creating the Un/thinkable," in *Identity and Foreign Policy in the Middle East,* ed. Michael Barnett, Shilbey Telhami (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002).
[38] Barry Rubin, ed., "Special Report: Analysis of the Israeli Elections."

domestic agenda. Yet, this also suggests a two-way street: that foreign politics can likewise drive domestic politics.

Even after the coalition is formed, often complications arise in policy implementation. A government system based on complex coalition politics has found many of Israel's policymakers in uncomfortable positions. Coalition members do not always behave as the prime minister would expect, or desire. Coalitions can block foreign policy initiatives making progress in the peace process impossible. The inherent warning in a coalition system is that the prime minister must pay attention to the demands of partners when developing a foreign policy plan. For one or more parties could withdraw from the coalition over friction on a particular policy, pulling the proverbial "carpet of the majority" out from under the prime minister. Prime Minister Netanyahu witnessed the crumbling of his coalition over a foreign policy dispute, and Sharon is in a similar position. Before the cabinet vote, he was forced to fire two ministers from the ultranationalist National Union Party who opposed the passing of his disengagement plan. Two more ministers from the far-right National Religious Party also quit, leaving Sharon's coalition with only 59 votes in the Knesset.[39] This is an example of how domestic political structures sometimes hamper foreign policy.

The possibilities for progress in the peace process can be ascertained by coalition make-up. A prime minister's willingness and ability to move forward with foreign policy regarding the Palestinians is impacted by the reliance on smaller parties to maintain coalition cohesion. Smaller parties are able to bully bigger ones on policy measures for both know small party support is critical for the ruling coalition's ability to function. Where a coalition measures on the political scale depends on the ideology of these smaller parties and the policy orientation of the group to which they belong. The bloc of parties on the Right emphasizes the inclination of the Palestinians towards never-ending violence and denial of Israel's right to exist. Therefore, parties oriented on the Right advocate more militant policies and are generally in line with demands of the religious parties.[40] Hence, a right-of-center coalition is more inclined towards a national identity that necessitates a policy for retaining the territories.

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[39] Molly Moore and John Ward Anderson, "Sharon, Arafat Face Challenges in Ranks."
[40] Asher Arian, *Executive Governance in Israel,* 85.

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Parties oriented to the Left appeal to the original Zionist vision of a homogeneous Jewish state and argue prolonged control over a non-Jewish population is neither just nor feasible. Therein, the Left tends to be more conciliatory in reference to the future of the territories as well as the Palestinians and is mostly supported by secular Jews.[41] As a result, a left-of-center coalition is likely to advocate a policy of withdrawal from the territories rather than continued occupation.[42] Analyzing the ideological leanings of the parties in a ruling coalition can lead one to identify the conditions under which a foreign policy will be defined and the extent to which a probable environment exists for progress in the peace process with the Palestinians.[43] The implication is that Israeli foreign policy is not "Realist" in an international relations sense, but ideological.

F.   ELECTORAL REFORM

A new electoral law was passed through the Knesset in 1992, known as *The Basic Law: The Government*. The reform was two-fold: 1) the threshold for obtaining a Knesset seat was raised from 1 to 1.5%, and 2) it allowed for the direct election of a prime minister. The reform resulted in a dramatic drop in the parliamentary representation of Labor and Likud, an increase in the representation of smaller parties based on group identities and religion, and growing tensions between the executive and legislature.

The new electoral system enabled the voter to split the ticket between the premier and the parliament. National interest, often in terms of peace policy, became the deciding factor for the prime minister, where many voters cast ballots based on individual interests such as ethnic or religious identities for the Knesset. The two big parties were weakened in the aftermath, with their electoral strength injured. Evidence of the declining trend of the two major parties was seen in the 1999 election where Likud lost 13 seats, and the Labor eight more since 1996. The outcome was the lowest parliamentary representation in over 40 years, 45 Knesset seats for both parties.[44]

An integral cause of the lessening dominance of the two major parties was the proliferation of smaller ones. This trend of increasing fragmentation of the party system

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[41] Ibid., 85.

[42] Alan Dowty, "Israeli Foreign Policy and the Jewish Question," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* Volume 3, No. 1 (March 1999). http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/1999/issue1/dowty.pdf

[43] Michael Barnett, "The Israeli Identity and the Peace Process: Re/creating the Un/thinkable."

[44] Myron J. Aronoff, "The Americanization of Israeli Politics and Realignment of the Party System," 101.

occurred despite raising the threshold to 1.5%. For example, compared to 10 parties in 1992 and 13 in 1996, the Knesset in 1999 was composed of 19 parties -- some with only a handful of seats.[45] Therefore, smaller parties had a disproportionate amount of political clout as they made the difference between the government having a majority or falling out of power.[46] Additionally, the more parties included in a coalition, the more diversity of identities and points of view vying for the pursuit of their interests, making it more difficult to come to a consensus.

The real victors of this split-ticket system, as the experiences of 1996 and 1999 testify, were the religious parties. Religious parties won 20% of the vote in 1996 resulting in three lists gaining parliamentary representation, and a record high of 23 Knesset seats.[47] The expansion continued in 1999 as the number of seats gained by religious parties, including the Ashkenazic ultra-Orthodox party, United Torah Judaism and the National Religious Party, rose to 28 -- another all time high.[48] Additionally, Shas, the ultra-Orthodox Sephardic party, won 17 seats in 1999, almost triple their representation in 1992. This catapulted them to the third largest party in Israeli politics and endowed Shas with invaluable leverage in determining the stability of the government.[49] All these factors gave religious parties political leverage often inconsistent with the actual size of their support base when it came to matters of policy.

Additionally, the Knesset became much weaker after the reform mainly due to political parties abandoning their cohesiveness and concentration for competing spots in the prime minister's coalition. At the same time, the reform granted the prime minister greater legitimacy since he was directly chosen by the people. Although the electoral law allowed for greater autonomy of the prime minister, his freedom to maneuver was still limited. Netanyahu experienced this as he was still dependent on backing from his own party as well as the will of smaller parties in his government with their competing agendas. The prime minister was often pulled back and forth by these various

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[45] Asher Arian, *Executive Governance in Israel,* 98.

[46] Gregory Mahler, "Israel's New Electoral System: Effects on Policy and Politics," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* Volume 1, No. 2 (July 1997). http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/1997/issue2/jv1n2a2.html

[47] Asher Arian, *The Second Republic: Politics in Israel,* 129.

[48] Barry Rubin, ed., "Special Report: Analysis of the Israeli Elections."

[49] Asher Arian, *Executive Governance in Israel,* 98-99.

constituencies as they fought over political spoils, making him ineffective.[50] The Wye Accords illustrate how Netanyahu tried to please everyone, but ended up alienating both his right and moderate allies. Moderates like Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai became so outraged over Netanyahu's timid approach to Oslo that he defected and actually ran against the prime minister in 1999. On the other side, Netanyahu's conservative partners, such as Benny Begin, were so upset over Netanyahu's acceptance of territorial withdrawal they withdrew from the coalition.[51] This left Netanyahu no choice but to call for early elections rather than run the risk of a no-confidence vote in the Knesset.

Regardless of the actual composition of the parliament, the directly elected prime minister had the task of establishing a coalition with a majority. Each political party courting the prime minister for a coveted position in the ruling coalition presented its policy demands and portfolio preferences. Since a government can only pursue a single policy posture on a given issue it must secure enough internal political support to do so. In order to entice parties to concede their foreign policy preferences, the prime minister's party must compensate partners with control over important government ministries and Knesset committees.[52] This facet of governance ensnared Prime Minister Netanyahu. In his haste to persuade parties to join the coalition, he made too many promises regarding ministerial positions and left few for his own party.[53] This offended many senior leaders in Likud who had to settle for less prominent posts, and cultivated a feeling of hostility towards Netanyahu's future policies.

Ironically, the electoral reform accomplished the opposite of that for which it was intended. It was designed to improve government stability, effectiveness, and fair distribution of political resources by halting governmental fragmentation and limiting the bargaining power of small parties. However, in practice, it only exaggerated these problems. Thus public opinion waned as the new system was used bringing the repeal of the law in 2001, reinstating a single ballot system.[54]

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[50] Joel Peters, "Under Netanyahu: The Current Situation in Israeli Politics," 7.
[51] Michael Barnett, "The Israeli Identity and the Peace Process: Re/creating the Un/thinkable."
[52] Asher Arian, *Executive Governance in Israel,* 97.
[53] Joel Peters, "Under Netanyahu: The Current Situation in Israeli Politics," 5.
[54] Asher Arian, *Executive Governance in Israel,* 103.

1.   After Reversal of the Electoral Reform

The 2003 elections, held after the reversal of the electoral reform, paint quite a different picture. They showed the initial trends resulting from electoral reform lacked perseverance. There was a decrease in religious and sectarian parties and an increase in secular parties. Shas, the surprising success story of the 1999 elections, lost over one-third of its voter support, translating into a loss of six seats for a major religious party. Similarly, as 1999 brought the highest level of influence ever for sectarian-based parties, specifically Russian, they conversely received a severe blow in 2003. None of the Russian parties attracted enough support to pass the 1.5% threshold, and all their representation in the Knesset dried up.[55]

Many speculate this was due to a shift in Israeli society from a sectarian to security focus. This shift resulted in a swing to the moderate right, with many Israelis softening their position on the Arab-Israeli conflict in aims to bolster security at home. There were two signals of this shift. One being that the majority in Likud now supported the formation of a Palestinian state. Secondly, the majority of Israelis who were conventionally indifferent to the settlements now favored trading land for peace. For instance, in 2003, 62% were willing to dismantle most settlements as part of a peace agreement, an increase from 38% the previous year.[56]   The aspect of domestic influence responsible for preventing those 62% from getting what they want is discussed in Chapter IV on Israeli society.

The last significant trend begun in 2003 was the rise of the secular party, Shinui. Shinui jumped from 6 seats in 1999 to 15 in 2003, making it the third largest party in the Knesset. The success of Shinui can be attributed to its self-portrayal as centrist on matters of security, an alternate to Labor who some felt had moved too far left. Shinui's triumph marked a significant accomplishment, the first government in over 25 years formed without any influence from ultra-Orthodox parties, and optimistic possibilities for foreign policy regarding Palestinian issues.[57]

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[55] Cameron S. Brown, "Israel's 2003 Elections: A Victory for the Moderate Right and Secular Center."
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid.

G. CONCLUSION

Israeli foreign policy is domestically fed. Some conclusions can be drawn about the relative magnitude of the access certain facets of the polity have in influencing foreign policy. Understanding the degree of power held by each actor enables one to determine the distinct places the Israeli government system can be pushed or pulled. Based on the discussion presented in this chapter, actors can be placed in two groups: major and minor players. The minor players in the policymaking process are the Knesset and the temporary electoral reform. Information suggests the Knesset lacks the direct channel to the political elite's decisionmaking process and therefore its influence is limited. "The Knesset at most can voice an opinion through its members, but has no power of decision."[58] The Knesset can, however, still topple the government with a vote of no-confidence. Electoral reform did facilitate some enduring effects, like the decreasing representation of the two largest parties in government. However, the reform did not impact the prime minister's autonomy from the political system. He remained dependent on the Knesset for confidence and continued to be constrained, as proven by the Netanyahu example. Furthermore, electoral reform did not have a lasting impact on policymaking as the trends were reversed, evidenced by the 2003 election. Another variable is the more recent personalization of Israeli politics, following after the American model.[59]

The major domestic players in Palestinian policy are the electorate, political parties, the prime minister, and coalitions. Voters are the least of the major players. They actively participate through Israel's democratic nature in choosing the makers of policy, but voter's influence after casting the ballot is nonexistent until the next election. Individual political parties can wield considerable weight when they wish to do so as illustrated by the Likud intervention against Sharon. Most important are the small and/or religious parties who have power in excess of their size. Both the two largest as well as small parties can block foreign policy initiatives in Israel's system of government. The heavy hitters in foreign policy are the prime minister and the ruling coalition. Despite all the troubles other participants can cause, the prime minister still has substantial power in

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[58] Clive Jones and Emma C. Murphy, *Israel: Challenges to Identity, Democracy, and the State*, 33.
[59] See Myron J. Aronoff, "The Americanization of Israeli Politics and Realignment of the Party System."

the policymaking process. He is further strengthened when backed by Israeli society—and especially the cabinet. The biggest of the major players is the ruling coalition, as it defines the size and shape of the box the prime minister has to operate within. Additionally, the coalition can voice inputs at various points during policy formation.

The major domestic players in Israel's foreign policy work together in a web of interaction. The significant implication is to comprehend how, and in what circumstances, they operate. Political parties can make or break a prime minister or coalition. The prime minister has the ability to lead his party and drive the coalition. Meanwhile the coalition can come to the aid of the prime minister when his party fails him or break up the government in disagreement. Ultimately, all of the actors in the Israeli government system work as parts of body, none able to accomplish anything independently. Though depending on the dynamics of the situation, some are certainly more dominant than others.

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III.   THE IDF AND CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS

The rising threat to Israel from Palestinian acts of violence as well as other international terrorist groups has called into question the military's influence on foreign policy. In his 2002 article "The Israeli Military and Israel's Palestinian Policy," Yoram Peri, noted literature on the impact of the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) on civilian policymaking is limited. Moreover, the military's participation in the peace process with the Palestinians has not been studied.[60] This chapter will address both topics. Understanding the balance of civil-military relations in Israel is paramount to determining domestic access points in Israel's Palestinian policy.

The IDF's influence on policymaking will be analyzed through discussion of militarism and military service in Israel. Within the IDF there exist varying views on Palestinian issues, and these along with religious allegiances and the abundance of retired officers in civilian politics all provide even further potential for input of the military into the civilian decisionmaking process. Since Oslo and increased Palestinian attacks on Israeli citizens, the military has played a stronger role in civil-military relations in regard to peace policy and negotiations, and has also exhibited some behavior that the IDF is trying to act more autonomously. During this time period as well, there have been disagreements between the civilian and military branches on foreign policy involving the Palestinians.

By its nature, the IDF is a reflection of Israeli society. Reserve service integrates the military into the civilian sphere and life in the military hardly varies from the pace and environment of civilian life.[61] The boundaries between military and civil institutions are blurred because the IDF in many ways is the heartbeat of Israeli society. These permeable boundaries were designed to facilitate civil-military relations. Even if these lines are sometimes unclear, a remarkable civil-military relationship exists in Israel. Given that Israel has been in a state of ongoing war since its independence, requiring a powerful military, it has not been at the expense of its democratic nature.

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[60] Yoram Peri, "The Israeli Military and Israel's Palestinian Policy: From Oslo to the Al Aqsa Intifada," *United States Institute of Peace* Peaceworks No. 47 (November 2002): 52.
[61] Ibid., 12.

Throughout Israel's history, the military has remained subordinate to civilian control. Most other countries in the Middle East have suffered a series of military coups and, until recently many states in the region have been governed by men in uniform. Comparatively, it is quite impressive that in Israel the military has never overthrown the civilian authority.[62] By formal stipulation the civil branch rules the civil-military relationship. In an informal sense, the military is not isolated in the barracks, but yields major influence in the political sphere and is very active in political life at its highest levels.[63] This explains why the military has remained satisfied with the civil-military structure in Israel.

While the civilian government has practiced control over the IDF, at the same it must depend on the military. There is a clear example in 1996 of how dependent the civilian leadership had become on the expertise of the military in the peace process for information and intelligence assessments, political planning, and practical know-how of IDF commanders having served in the territories. When Netanyahu became prime minister he disagreed with the previous administration's use of senior military officers in political affairs and announced that peace talks would be handled solely by civilians. However, before long, he realized he absolutely needed the military's knowledge to conduct political-security negotiations with the Palestinians, and had no choice to bring the military back into the fold.[64]

1.   Israeli Foreign Policy

Israel's first prime minister--and defense minister--David Ben-Gurion, set the priority of national security over diplomacy in the 1950s.[65] Despite changes in Israeli-Palestinian dynamics since Oslo, the traditional position that Israel has no foreign policy, only a defense policy remains the prevailing lens through which Israel views its external landscape. Today, security is still central to the Israel's foreign policymaking.[66]

In the contest for influence within the Israeli cabinet, the foreign ministry has played a subordinate role to the premier and defense ministry. For instance, Uri Savir, of

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[62] Ibid., 11.
[63] Asher Arian, *The Second Republic: Politics in Israel*, 299.
[64] Yoram Peri, "The Israeli Military and Israel's Palestinian Policy: From Oslo to the Al Aqsa Intifada," 5,25.
[65] Ibid., 20.
[66] Clive Jones and Emma C. Murphy, *Israel: Challenges to Identity, Democracy, and the State*, 91.

the Foreign Ministry, was responsible for brokering the negotiations that led to the Oslo accords. However, his involvement was circumvented as leadership in the defense ministry and the IDF planned the implementation of the Accords once they were signed.[67]

2. The Defense Ministry and Policy

A strong emphasis on defense has become an Israeli way of life. Defense policy commands the utmost attention, largest slice of the budget[68] and involves years of service from the majority of Israeli citizens.[69] Furthermore, most senior decision makers grew up in the IDF and were molded by the same socialization processes.[70] Additionally, the division between policymaking and military loyalty can be foggy as prime ministers sometimes serve as their own defense ministers, such as Levi Eshkol, Menachem Begin, Shimon Peres, Yitzhak Rabin, and Ehud Barak.[71]

A. THE MILITARY

1. Militarism

> We are a generation of settlers, yet without a helmet or a gun barrel we will be unable to plant a tree or build a house…The only choice we have is to be armed, strong and resolute or else our sword will fall from our hands and the thread of our lives will be severed.[72]

Moshe Dayan, then chief of staff, spoke these words in 1956; yet they still encompass an important element of Israeli culture that impacts foreign policy regarding the Palestinians today. This attitude has allowed Israel to become an example of a militaristic society. In Israel, military considerations almost always come before political, economic, or even ideological concerns.[73] One could argue that ideology drives the IDF, as strictly military evaluations would infrequently drive Israel to choose the actions it does. Therefore, the peace process is also a military matter. In the IDF, national

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[67] Ibid., 94.

[68] For instance in 1996, the military budget reached 10.6% of GDP and represented about 21.5% of the total 1996 budget. http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/israel/idf.htm, October 2004.

[69] Asher Arian, *The Second Republic: Politics in Israel*, 290.

[70] Efraim Inbar, "Israeli National Security, 1973-96," in *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 555, Israel in Transition (Jan., 1998): 64,66.

[71] Asher Arian, *The Second Republic: Politics in Israel*, 247-8.

[72] Baruch Kimmerling, *The Invention and Decline of Israeliness: State, Society, and the Military*, (UCal, 2001), 208.

[73] Ibid., 215. For a more in depth discussion, see Uri Ben Eliezer, *The Making of Israeli Militarism*, (Indiana University Press, 1998).

security is the main focus and most believe that all other foreign policy issues, including the peace process, must be dealt with accordingly.

2.   Military Service

Israel has one of the highest percentages of its citizens in the military, and is one of the most battle-trained forces in the world. In 2002, around 600,000 men and women serve in its air, ground, and naval forces—including the reserves. Israel practices universal conscription for active duty, with exceptions for Arab or ultra-orthodox citizens. All Israelis, regardless of gender, are eligible for a draft into the IDF when they turn 18. Reservists, overwhelmingly males, make up almost 10 percent of the population. For these reasons, a social significance is associated with military service and is the most collectively shared of all national experiences.[74]

3.   Policy Preferences in the IDF

Military leadership's viewpoints on Palestinian issues have influence on decisionmaking and represent both sides of the debate. Since beginning negotiations with the Palestinians many generals tend to be more dovish in their position regarding territorial entrenchment and support the idea of Palestinian self-determination -- often more than wider Israeli society.[75]   The military conventionally employs pragmatic approaches and therefore many senior officers realize these stances could mean less commitment of forces in potentially lethal areas and minimize future conflicts. This practice of evaluating the battlefield is what has led IDF senior commanders to support peace-oriented policies.[76]

A look at a Syrian example shows how senior military leaders think more pragmatically leading them to push for peace. The current CGS Lt. Gen Moshe Ya'alon recently "threw down the gauntlet to his Prime Minister." Ya'alon is a known hard-liner, but has come out with more dovish statements than Sharon and Mofaz, urging to open peace negotiations with Syria. It might seem out of character for the military, not the civilians, to be the ones encouraging the release of the Golan Heights. Yet the CGS recognizes with the loss of USSR support, Syria is no match for Israel militarily. Also,

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[74] Yoram Peri, "The Israeli Military and Israel's Palestinian Policy: From Oslo to the Al Aqsa Intifada," 11.

[75] Clive Jones and Emma C. Murphy, *Israel: Challenges to Identity, Democracy, and the State*, 53.

[76] Yoram Peri, "Civil-Military Relations in Israel in Crisis," in Maman, Ben-Ari, and Rosenhek, eds., *Military, State, and Society in Israel* (Transaction, 2001): 121.

IDF leadership understands that making peace with Syria will have positive ripple effects. It would buy Israeli legitimacy in the Arab world and steal thunder from motivation for Hizbollah attacks on the IDF and Israeli citizens.[77]

In light of dovish perspectives, two military subgroups warrant particular attention. The first includes members of the IDF that have had close contact with the Palestinian population or leadership. After such experiences these officers became more sensitive to Palestinian needs as well as the logic behind their reasoning, and as a result they were more agreeable to cooperating with their requests. This refers to those who dealt with security and counterterrorism, including heads of the General Security Service. Some notable individuals in this group: Ya'akov Peri, Carmi Gilon, and Yossi Ginnosar, showed the sharpest awareness of Palestinians' concerns and were the most disposed to finding a workable response. Also in this group are those who held the post of coordinator of activities in the territories, such as Maj.Gen. Oren Shachor and Maj.Gen. Ya'akov Orr. In fact, Maj.Gen. Orr was quoted in a Ha'aretz interview regarding policy towards the Palestinians as saying, "I don't agree with the thesis of 'Let's squeeze a bit more and they'll give in'." He was even known as "the ambassador of Palestine on the General Staff" by his fellow officers.[78]

The second group of IDF officers with dovish leanings were those engaged in political interaction with Palestinians during the peace process. After officers spent hours sharing a table during negotiations they became more cognizant of Palestinians' needs, interests, and attitudes. Lt.Gen. Ammon Shahak and Maj.Gen. Uzi Dayan are salient models of those holding this informed outlook.[79] It is important to recognize members in these two groups, as they are the most understanding--as well as experienced--men in relations with the Palestinians and could be the most beneficial in policy formation.

Of course there are also hawks in Israel's military that also have some bearing on policy. In the early 1990s after the first Palestinian Intifada, many in the military opposed the plan for a unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. Despite the fact that the occupation drained IDF resources, many feared evacuation without a political

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[77] Yoram Peri, "Peace with Syria," *Middle East Institute*, (September 27, 2004) http://www.mideasti.org/articles/doc289.html
[78] Yoram Peri, "The Israeli Military and Israel's Palestinian Policy: From Oslo to the Al Aqsa Intifada," 45-46, 50.
[79] Ibid., 46.

agreement would be seen as a sign of weakness to motivated Palestinian militants, and would bring increased threats and eventually undermine the nation's very survival.[80] Then as violence and terrorists attacks in Israel became more rampant in the late 1990s, much of the support for the peace process in the IDF further waned.[81]

Some in the Israeli military establishment prefer a more hard-line policy because they see the peace process as undermining deterrence capability. They hold that an incompatibility exists between maintaining an effective deterrence strategy and simultaneously pursuing a conciliatory policy to reassure Palestinians of Israeli moderation. Segments of the IDF feel a more moderate policy meant to lower tensions might be perceived as a loss of Israeli will and resurrect the hope that annihilation of Israel is possible.[82] Along these lines, there is a strong incentive among the IDF leadership to repair the military's prestige and faith in its abilities as a capable deterrent after the unilateral withdrawal from southern Lebanon in May of 2000. They stress the importance of this view, as Palestinians are perceived to be attempting a repeat of Hizbollah successes.[83] However, a hawkish stance can hinder the formulation as well as implementation of viable policy avenues. The importance of understanding Palestinian policy preferences in the IDF is two-fold: the military is a major domestic constituency, and the military has a huge amount of influence in the foreign policymaking process.

4. Religion in the IDF

There are two service categories based on religion in the IDF that could play a significant role in Palestinian policymaking in the future. The first is segregated service, embodied by the national-religious community--which accounts for around 13 percent of Israeli society. Their attitude towards enlistment is enthusiastic. For this segment of the population, participating in national reconstruction is a holy calling. Therein, service in the military for the basis of defending the ideal of the Jewish state is a religious duty. This results in segregated service because national-religious citizens primarily elect to serve in the elite reconnaissance (*sayeret*) units, and more recently as pilots as well. In fact, their representation in the IDF is beyond their proportion in the eligible conscript

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[80] Shibley Telhami, "The Ties That Bind: Americans, Arabs, and Israelis After September 11," *Foreign Affairs* (March/April, 2004): 8.

[81] Yoram Peri, "The Israeli Military and Israel's Palestinian Policy: From Oslo to the Al Aqsa Intifada," 5.

[82] Efraim Inbar, "Israeli National Security, 1973-96," 74.

[83] Clive Jones, "One Size Fits All: Israel, Intelligence, and the al-Aqsa Intifada," 279.

population—perhaps by a ratio of three to one.[84] As time marches on and more of this group serves in the military and rises through the ranks to senior commanders, "it is liable to lead to a radical change in the value-system of the Israeli officer class" to a more hard-line stance.[85] Therefore if this trend continues, and all signs indicate that it will, it could have substantial impact on civil-military relations involved in policy formation regarding Palestinian issues.

The second type of service becoming more prevalent among Israeli troops is conditional service. Conditional service refers to those who refuse to carry out orders of a certain type in a given location for they feel it would compromise their religious and/or ideological beliefs. In 1993, over a thousand reservists signed a public petition testifying that dismantling territories would violate their religious beliefs and would refuse summonses to duty.[86] Another example is from September 2003, when 27 Israeli pilots sent a letter to the Commander of the Air Force notifying him of their refusal to carry out strikes in Palestinian areas. They condemned the orders saying, "We, veteran and active pilots... are opposed to carrying out the illegal and immoral attack orders of the sort that Israel carries out in the territories."[87] Events like these cause potentially serious implications for Israel's ability to carry out foreign policy originated in the civil branch pertaining to the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

5.   Retired Officers in the Political Arena

The military has always been a prevalent recruiting pool for political leadership in Israel. The frequent jump of retired officers onto the political scene explains the strong military flavor in the Israeli government. 'Parachuting'--as it is referred to in Israel--has provided access for military influence into the civilian political sphere and policymaking.[88] Just 100 days after they retire from active duty and transition to the reserves, officers are allowed to don the political hat. This explains the four-month delay before Maj.-Gen. Shaul Mofaz became the current Defense Minister after retiring as

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[84] Stuart Cohen, "From Integration to Segregation: The role of religion in the IDF," *Armed Forces and Society* 25, No. 3 (April 1, 1999): 396-7.

[85] Ibid., 402.

[86] Ibid., 399.

[87] "Some Israeli Pilots Refuse Strikes," *CBS News,* (Sept. 25, 2003). http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2003/09/26/world/main575270.shtml, November 2004.

[88] For more on parachuting see Yoram Peri, *Between Battles and Ballots: Israeli Military in Politics,* (Cambridge University Press, 1983).

CGS. One remarkable statistic is that since 1967, every single lieutenant-general (the highest achievable rank in Israel) has taken on political a role, as have many major-generals like Ariel Sharon.[89] Also, Matan Vilnai, Amnon Lipkin Shahak, and Motta Gur were all either recent deputy ministers or key cabinet members. Additional examples of high-profile actors that transitioned from Israel's military culture and into decisionmaking include Yigal Yadin, Ezer Weizmann, Moshe Dayan, Yigal Allon, Ehud Barak, and Yitzhak Mordechai -- all former generals who at one point held the portfolios of either foreign affairs or defense, and even prime minister.[90] For example, Yitzhak Rabin, functioned as both Prime Minister and Minister of Defense twice, having already served as IDF chief of staff.

Even when they choose not to formally enter politics, retired officers are often involved publicly in political discourse. For instance, a custom has developed since Oslo. Before every election a group of senior reserve officers gather to advertise their authoritative judgment about the necessity to retain the territories for national preservation.[91] On the other hand, in some cases, officers barely out of uniform are bolder than civilians in publicizing the importance of the peace process with the Palestinians. For instance, someone who had once been an integral part in the military issued statements that could have come from an activist in Peace Now. In the summer of 2001, Maj.-Gen. (res.) Ami Ayalon, former commander in chief of the navy and head of the GSS, surprised the public when he aired his policy desires. Ayalon called for immediate withdrawal from the territories.[92]

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[89] David McDowall, "Dilemmas of the Jewish State," in Hourani, Khoury, Wilson, eds., *The Modern Middle East* (UCal, 1993), 657.

[90] Clive Jones and Emma C. Murphy, *Israel: Challenges to Identity, Democracy, and the State*, 93.

[91] Asher Arian, *The Second Republic: Politics in Israel*, 296.

[92] Yoram Peri, "The Israeli Military and Israel's Palestinian Policy: From Oslo to the Al Aqsa Intifada," 50.

B. CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS

1. Increased Military Influence

As an active implementer of policy, the military is a major catalyst in embarking on the road to peace as well as war.[93] In the post Oslo era, with increasing conflict involving the Palestinians, Israel's civil-military balance has shifted more heavily towards the military establishment. The degree of the professional military class participation in policymaking varies from an advisory role to an altogether swaying actor. For example, when Prime Minister Barak tried to continue diplomatic communications with Chairman Yasir Arafat of the Palestinian Authority, Chief of General Staff Mofaz publicly called for a more hard-line Palestinian policy. Incapable of controlling Mofaz and other senior officers sharing his views, Barak was pressured into assuming the military's stance -- and cut all ties to the Palestinian leader.[94]

The military's influence on the senior political echelon is exhibited via a number of channels. By its status in Israel's institutional structure, the military is required to make continuous input regarding foreign policy. One form of such input involves the provision of intelligence assessments and analysis, which contain both subjective and objective components – therefore giving the military access points into the decisionmaking process.[95] Another significant input the military has is its strong presence in the cabinet. Since the 1967 War, it has become the norm for the chief of the general staff, and often his deputy and additional senior commanders, and the head of military intelligence to attend and contribute in cabinet meetings. Though they cannot cast a formal vote, the military's voice in political planning has given it substantial influence on government decisionmaking.[96]

Senior officers have also engaged in the forming of foreign policy by playing a central part in negotiations involving the Palestinians, through which their judgments have carried great weight with the political leadership. For instance, Prime Minister Rabin invited the deep involvement of high-ranking military officers, rather than their

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[93] Ibid., 5.

[94] Ibid., 6.

[95] R. D. McLaurin, Foreign policy making in the Middle East: Domestic influences on policy in Egypt, Iraq, Israel, and Syria, 180.

[96] Eva Etzioni-Halevy, "Civil-Military Relations and Democracy: The Case of the Military-Political Elites' Connection in Israel," *Armed Forces and Society* 22:3 (1996): 407.

civilian counterparts, in peace process talks.[97] Further evidence of the heavy involvement of the military in Palestinian negotiations is found in a practice begun with Oslo; planning meetings are held at the IDF headquarters in Tel Aviv. Military officers sit side by side with government officials as they examine materials in preparation for making decisions. Likewise, this is the same location for forums between all the top brass: the prime minister, the government, and the "security cabinet" or "kitchen cabinet" as it has come to be called in Israel. Everyone understands that the politicians have the formal say on matters, yet the military exerts influence at every step leading to decisions. It is through this method of approaching Palestinian issues that the military is seen not merely as a subordinate or silent partner, but acting in an equivalent capacity as the civilian leadership.[98]

Another reason for the increased involvement of the military in foreign policy is the incentive recognized by policymakers. They are aware that welcoming the military into decisionmaking will likely result in high-ranking officers publicly praising the policy they were involved in developing. The politician will then gain legitimacy and support for the policy with the Israeli public.[99] This explains another facet of why the military is given influence in Israel's foreign policymaking.

2.   Tail Wagging the Dog

Some have claimed the IDF is guilty of fighting a political war with the intent to protect the settlements instead of national security, therein forcing the civilian leadership into conflict with the Palestinians.[100] So far, there have been no incidents of soldiers disobeying orders originating from the political leadership or interfering with the implementation of policy. However, during wartime there have been multiple reports of the military carrying orders farther than politicians intended or when the IDF only gained approval for their actions post facto. Cases of field commanders turning off their radios so as not to hear commands coming from the government are recurrent in IDF history, even utilized by Ariel Sharon and Ehud Barak. A specific instance where the military was

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[97] Yoram Peri, "Civil-Military Relations in Israel in Crisis," 118.
[98] Yoram Peri, "The Israeli Military and Israel's Palestinian Policy: From Oslo to the Al Aqsa Intifada," 27.
[99] Eva Etzioni-Halevy, "Civil-Military Relations and Democracy: The Case of the Military-Political Elites' Connection in Israel," 413.
[100] Yoram Peri, "The Israeli Military and Israel's Palestinian Policy: From Oslo to the Al Aqsa Intifada," 43.

accused of pursuing its own agenda instead of the government's was when the IDF attacked the party of Mohammed Dahlan, preventive security chief in the Gaza Strip, when he departed with a group of Israeli representatives after security talks with the Palestinian Authority. However, these and other instances have been defended as miscommunications or mistakes on the part of soldiers.[101] On the other hand, some within the IDF have complained the military is being used by the civilians to protect ideological extremists in the territories.

Another example in 2001 is worthy of mention. It concerned plans regarding the "buffer zone" (the area along the "green line") blocking passage via a fence and pronouncing it a closed military zone. It is unclear whether the plan had military benefits, but certainly carried political implications. Putting the buffer zone into effect would indicate Israel had given up on reaching an agreement with the Palestinian Authority. Furthermore, the buffer zone would likely create another security zone similar to that inside the territories in southern Lebanon, which had been a cause of steady conflict and criticism. For these reasons, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon firmly opposed the plan and had decided not to move forward on it. However, while Sharon was traveling to Russia, he received word that the chief of general staff was about to hold a press conference unveiling the buffer zone plan. Sharon was furious and immediately put a stop to the press conference and told the journalists on his plane that the CGS had forgotten who set Israeli foreign policy.[102] This author does not believe the defense establishment to be a monolithic body. Therefore a combination of both occurs— sometimes the military acts in its own interests, and other times the civilians use the military to accomplish theirs.

3.   Civil-Military Relations in Conflict

Since Oslo there have been disputes between the military establishment and the civilian government in Israel. The split became more pronounced in 1996 when the political Right in Netanyahu's government charged the IDF with putting a stop to the ongoing Palestinian attacks on Israeli citizens.[103] However, the IDF has been perceived as unable to deliver the goods. Consequently the prime minister, other ministers and

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[101] Ibid., 39-40.
[102] Ibid., 40.
[103] Ibid., 15.

Knesset members, such as the chairman of the Foreign Affairs and Security Committee, have expressed a lack of confidence in the chief of staff and senior military leadership.[104]

The military high command has responded that it cannot halt the killings of innocent Israelis, for the methods required would far exceed those acceptable by Western democracies and normative codes of Israeli society.[105] The IDF therefore complains that the political echelon assigns it tasks that are subject to constraints preventing the fulfillment of its policy objectives. These ideas have been voiced in recent years by several chiefs of staff. For example, Maj.Gen. Dan Shomron who was in command during the Intifada, argued that all the IDF could do was limit the violence, not eradicate it altogether. Ultimately, he saw the only way to stop the Palestinian attacks was through a political solution.[106]

In fact, several times in 1997 high-ranking officers rejected calls for aggressive action raised by the political echelon, especially Prime Minister Netanyahu. Where once it was the military that pushed for military action in reaction to Arab armies or Palestinian aggression, the IDF now found itself in a moderating role, restraining "Netanyahu's adventurous initiatives."[107]

After internal debates turned up fruitless, both sides often cast disgruntled jabs at the other in the press, thus airing their disputes in front of the Israeli public. The clash over policy between the political and military branches had become so fierce that in the 1999 elections, tens of recently retired generals joined opposition parties or formed new ones, with a single mission: to overthrow the reigning government, and they succeeded.[108] In doing so, they also satisfied a corporate interest by installing a former military leader, which Netanyahu was not. Many following civil-military matters in Israel over the past decade have noted all the above indications as leading to a crisis in relations between senior military officers and political elites.

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[104] Yoram Peri, "Civil-Military Relations in Israel in Crisis," 118.

[105] Yoram Peri, "The Israeli Military and Israel's Palestinian Policy: From Oslo to the Al Aqsa Intifada," 15.

[106] Yoram Peri, "Civil-Military Relations in Israel in Crisis," 111,119. See also Ze-ev Schiff & Ehud Ya-ari, eds, *Intifada:The Palestinian Uprising--Israel's Third Front,* (Simon and Schuster, 1990).

[107] Ibid., 121.

[108] Ibid., 122.

C. CONCLUSION

The IDF is a domestic component of foreign policymaking. This is a fact international negotiators need to keep in mind. Given the abundance of Israeli citizens associated with military service, the IDF has become a collective characteristic of Israeli society and impacts civil-military relations. With the preeminence assigned to national security in Israel, the defense establishment will continue to have a heavy hand in foreign policy formation. Therein it is vital for U.S. policymakers to understand Israel's priorities to know how to best collaborate with their ally.

Differing views on Palestinian policy as well as religious preferences within the IDF will also be a significant factor shaping future civil-military relations in Israel. Policymakers in Washington need to identify which IDF leaders most agree with American interests and work with them. Furthermore, the military background of Israel's past and present political leadership means decisionmaking in areas encompassing Palestinian issues with continue to have a pronounced military flavor.

The IDF's influence on policy formation, due to the intertwining nature of civil-military relations, will keep increasing. This is due to the reality that the military is used by the government for policy planning, negotiations, and the implementation of policy with the Palestinians. This is why it is so critical for U.S. policymakers to get their hands around the IDF and its role in the civil-military partnership in Israel.

Tension between the political and military elites over Palestinian plans may reach a critical point if the government requests the IDF to carry out orders of which is it incapable because the methods needed are perceived as unacceptable. Jockeying between military and political elites can be just as important as any foreign ministry or prime minister desires. Conflict should be recognized and assessed for true difference over policy or as a political ploy. All the above factors are evidence that the military is an important source of domestic influence on Israel's foreign policy.

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IV.   SOCIETY

For most countries in the Middle East, a study of their political system and civil-military relations would be sufficient to understand the domestic drivers on foreign policymaking. The majority of countries in this region of the world are run by exclusive regimes and the armed forces alone; average citizens have little or no influence on state behavior. In contrast, to get a full picture of the possible domestic influences on decisionmaking in Israel, a third layer must be discussed – society at large. Societal factors need to be understood as they spill over into the political system in Israel as well as the military establishment.

Israel is by no means a society of singular voice, there are many internal debates going to the very core of the peace process with the Palestinians. There are differing opinions as to Israel's national identity, as well as religious, communal, and subcultural divisions. Furthermore, as a liberal democratic society, Israel has very active interest groups, clearly defined public opinion, and a free press. All these societal aspects have varying objectives and potential to play an important part in the Palestinian policy Israel pursues. A comprehensive assessment of Israel's foreign policymaking process would be incomplete without an examination of influential elements in the wider population. It must be noted there is difficulty in dealing with this aspect of Israel's domestic inputs to foreign policy. The impact of any part of society is hard to measure quantitatively and it is extremely problematic to draw direct causal relationships between policies made.

The main cleavages that compose the societal mosaic in Israel are communal groups – mainly Ashkenazi and Mizrachim Jews, Russian Immigrants, and Arabs. Various subcultures also exist -- from Ultra-Orthodox Jews to the growing secular sector, as well as subgroups of ultra-nationalists and settlers. Each has their own vision as to how Israeli national identity ought to be defined.[109] The disputes over national identity and foreign policy preferences are causally connected. The peace process with the Palestinians is not simply a territorial matter; it is fundamental to character of Israel. For a mobilized religious component of society, Judea and Samaria are part of Israel's soul. To revisionist Zionists, a peace process with withdrawals is a return to exile and threatens

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[109] Clive Jones and Emma C. Murphy, *Israel: Challenges to Identity, Democracy, and the State*, 31.

the very notion of Zionism. For leftist Israelis and secular Jews in general, the territories pose a stumbling block to growth and retaining a democratic state.[110]

Israeli politicians are aware of these conflicting viewpoints and try to find a delicate balance to formulate foreign policy. However, the constant disagreement over national identity, with its religious-secular divide and communal and cultural rifts, hinder the political leadership in building the support needed for an acceptable Palestinian policy.[111] Defining national identity and coordinating it with Israeli nationalism, religious considerations, and calls for peace, pose one of the greatest obstacles for Israel in the twenty-first century.[112]

A.   COMMUNAL GROUPS

Israeli society is derived from a variety of backgrounds resulting from waves of immigration. Each communal group is a piece of the political puzzle, where "one of the dominant criteria is ethnicity, not the Jewish and non-Jewish distinction, but intra-Jewish ethnicity."[113] The surprising success of Sephardim, Russian, and Arab-Israeli parties in the 1996 elections initiated the belief that communal groups were beginning to define the core of Israeli society.[114]

1.   Ashkenazi and Mizrachim

The two major communal groups are the *Ashkenazi* Jews who originated from America and Europe, and the *Mizrachim* (Orientals in Hebrew) Jews, previously referred to as Sephardim, who immigrated from North Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. By 1996, the *Ashkenazim* had grown to 50% of the electorate while the *Mizrachim* went down to 39%. Oren Yiftachel has traced a relationship between support for the peace process with the Palestinians and the socio-economic status of these two communities. It is often regarded that the peace process benefits the middle and upper *Ashkenazim* classes, who prefer a conciliatory foreign policy as a means to advance their own commercial interests and to attract foreign investors to a calmer Israel. The *Mizrachim* however, perceive they have been excluded from any economic benefits of the peace

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[110] Michael Barnett, "The Israeli Identity and the Peace Process: Re/creating the Un/thinkable."
[111] Ibid., 59.
[112] Clive Jones and Emma C. Murphy, *Israel: Challenges to Identity, Democracy, and the State*, 127.
[113] Asher Arian, *The Second Republic: Politics in Israel*, 32.
[114] Michael Barnett, "The Israeli Identity and the Peace Process: Re/creating the Un/thinkable," 58.

process. This has lead to an indifferent outlook, and sometimes fierce opposition to territorial concessions by Oriental Jews.[115]

2. Russian Immigrants

During the 1990s more than three quarter of a million Jews from the former Soviet Union immigrated to Israel and greatly changed the dynamic of society, as the most secular wave ever. By 1996, Russian immigrants constituted roughly 20% of the Israeli population, and serious political pull. Not only are the Russians a voting resource, they are a highly political people. They demonstrated this by forming their own party, *Israel b'Aliya*, just months before the 1996 election and still captured seven Knesset seats.[116] *Israel b'Aliya* was a crucial party to the ruling coalition, not only for its number of Knesset seats, but more importantly due to its open-mindedness on foreign policy issues -- such as fate of the territories, because their vote was driven more by economics than ideology.[117] However, the more recent 2001 and 2003 election results showed a trend of decreased Russian immigrant political power in the parliament and coalition politics. The magnitude of influence this community will sustain in Israel's policymaking remains to be seen.

3. Arab-Israelis

For decades any national ethnic-based Arab political organization or protest movement was suffocated in Israel. Over time, Israeli-Arabs have accumulated considerable material wealth and political potential. For example, Prime Minister Rabin included two Arab parties in his coalition, the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality, and the United Arab List.[118] Arab parties increased their Knesset seats from five in 1992 to 10 in 1999; additionally three Arabs were elected to the Knesset on the lists of other parties. However, greater parliamentary representation has failed to translate into added political influence for Arabs. They were excluded from both Netanyahu's and Barak's governments, and no Arab has ever served as a cabinet minister.[119] Still, the fact that the

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[115] Clive Jones and Emma C. Murphy, *Israel: Challenges to Identity, Democracy, and the State*, 125.

[116] Baruch Kimmerling, "Elections as a Battleground over Collective Identity," in *The Elections in Israel 1996* ed. Asher Arian, Michal Shamir (SUNY, 1999), 39.

[117] Zvi Gitelman and Ken Goldstein, "The 'Russian' Revolution in Israeli Politics," 145.

[118] Baruch Kimmerling, "Elections as a Battleground over Collective Identity," 40-41,30.

[119] Myron J. Aronoff, "The Americanization of Israeli Politics and Realignment of the Party System,"104.

Arab community exists makes them a domestic constituency every Israeli policymaker must take into account.

B.   SUBCULTURES

A culture often contains numerous subcultures. A subculture is a social group within a national culture that has distinctive patterns of behavior and beliefs. These distinctions can be derived from ethnic background, religion, or other factors that serve to unify the group. Israel's culture is made up of shared national experiences involving a heightened sensitivity to national security from ongoing conflict with its Arab neighbors and a degree of Jewish heritage. On a more micro-level Israel is fragmented into various diverse subcultures.

Competing values of liberalism, nationalism, and religious fundamentalism dictate the public forum--and policy. Therein another variable in Israel's foreign policy equation is the political efforts of different subcultures, since these subgroups are active in the political sphere.[120] As a result, it is important to grasp the impact certain subcultures within Israel have on the formulation of the nation's foreign policy.

1.   Secular Jews

The religious-secular divide has become more pronounced in Israel during the last decade, as the gap between the political left and right has deepened.[121] The dichotomy in approaching foreign policy with the Palestinians between the religious and the secular segments of society has become a source of political polarization in Israel. Foreign policy preferences among secular Israelis differ and are motivated by a mixture of factors.

Many secular Jews favor withdrawal from the territories and advancing the peace process to serve Israeli interests in economic growth, water and other resources, "normalcy", technological and cultural progress, and the like.[122] Also, this subgroup is most sympathetic to the plight of the Palestinians and the impoverished living conditions they suffer in the West Bank and Gaza.

Other secular Jews want to give up land out of a concern for maintaining Israel's democratic and Jewish nature. Growing awareness of the imminent 'demographic

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[120] Alan Dowty, "Israeli Foreign Policy and the Jewish Question."

[121] Stuart Cohen, "From Integration to Segregation: The role of religion in the IDF," 393.

[122] Baruch Kimmerling, *The Invention and Decline of Israeliness: State, Society, and the Military*, 223.

problem' among Israelis is intensifying a sense of urgency in relations with the Palestinians. As of 2003, one quarter of a million Jews live alongside three million Palestinians in the territories, and currently Palestinians make up 20% of the Israeli population. The higher birthrates of Israeli Arabs on both sides of the Green Line raises a red flag to Jewish Israelis that even immigration cannot lower.[123] The reality has set in that by 2015, Jewish and Arab populations will be equal.[124]

However secular Jews cannot by any stretch be typecast. Many secular Jews believe that Israel is engaged in a battle for survival with the Arabs and must prevent annihilation by maintaining Israeli superiority in the region.   A couple glaring examples of secular Jews staunchly in the securitist camp are the current Prime Minister Sharon and former premier Netanyahu.

2.   Haredim and Ultra-Orthodox

Ultra-Orthodox Jewry has traditionally only focused on domestic issues relating to religious observance in Israel. However, since Oslo even strictly observant religious Jews have taken a keen interest in foreign policy and are overall opposed to Israeli territorial concessions to the Palestinians. To the haredim, Judea and Samaria (The West Bank) are religiously significant to Israel. Ultra-orthodox Jews fervently support right-wing religious parties and have an impressive ability to mobilize the population during elections.[125]   In fact, it is rare that one of their parties has not been included in the government's coalition, giving the haredim substantial political leverage.

On the other hand, some rabbis in strictly orthodox groups affiliated with the political party United Torah Judaism, have reasoned that achieving peace might warrant surrendering the territories Israel has occupied since the War of 1967. One illustration is Rabbi Moshe Taragin, who believes the settler colonies are part of the divine plan ultimately resulting in the coming of the Messiah. Yet, in regards to Sharon's Gaza disengagement plan, Rabbi Taragin said that the possibility that an exchange of land

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[123] Asher Arian, "Israeli Public Opinion on National Security 2003." (Tel Aviv University: Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, October 2003), 11-12. http://www.tau.ac.il/jcss/memoranda/memo67.pdf
[124] Clive Jones and Emma C. Murphy, *Israel: Challenges to Identity, Democracy, and the State*, 43.
[125] Baruch Kimmerling, "Elections as a Battleground over Collective Identity," 34.

"would serve a peaceful environment deserved attention." He further explained, "We're willing to allow pragmatism to temper our messianism."[126]

3. Religious-National

Ultra-nationalists have a strong hold in religious-Zionist circles and maintain that a Greater Israel under Jewish control is not only needed for reasons of security, but additionally a religious commandment to be obeyed. Occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip has paved the way for the nationalization of religion to occur, combining national and religious extremism.[127] Dissatisfied with Rabin's handling of Israel's identity crisis after Oslo, ultra-nationalist and Orthodox Jews intensified their policy advocacy efforts and joined forces to increase their political pursuits.[128] The National Religious Party is the main representative of this subculture and has faired well in Israeli governments.

4. Settlers

Tens of thousands of Israelis have erected settlements in the territories captured in the 1967 War. Israeli settlers believe holding the land is a holy calling. For them, the settlements symbolize the fruition of prophesy for God's people.[129] Settlers fear the Premier's policy for a withdrawal from Gaza would start Israel down a slippery slope.

The Settlers have actively and persistently expressed to the current Likud government their outrage over the prime ministers planned evacuation from Gaza and the northern West Bank. And with marked success -- it has yet to win approval despite repeated attempts and will likely cost Sharon his coalition. One Israeli journalist aptly explained the settlers' secret to success in influencing the national agenda: "While they are a small minority, they are highly motivated, well organized with a firm ideology and enormous financial resources – some directly from government ministries – and driven

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[126] Joseph Berger, "For Orthodox Israelis, Views Differ on Yielding Gaza," *New York Times* (June 15, 2004).

[127] Gideon Aran, "Jewish Zionist Fundamentalism: the Bloc of the Faithful in Israel (Gush Emunim)," in *Fundamentalisms Observed* ed. Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (UChicago, 1991), 294.

[128] Michael Barnett, "The Israeli Identity and the Peace Process: Re/creating the Un/thinkable," 82.

[129] Ira Sharkansky, "Extremism, Intensity, and Apocalyptic Warning: Prophetic Policy Advocacy in Modern Israel," in *Israeli Politics in the 1990s: Key Domestic and Foreign Policy Factors* ed. Bernard Reich and Kieval R. Gershon (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1991), 56.

with a messianic passion."[130] The settlers are unified with a focused vision to retain the territories and have proven determined enough to back up their words with action.

C. INTEREST GROUPS

An interest group is an organization or other collective of people who share a specific cause. They operate on behalf of a certain interest, often in aims to bring about a political result. This chapter will discuss interest groups or grassroots movements that stand for separate ideological, ethnic, or religious positions regarding Israeli-Palestinian relations that pressure Israel's foreign policymaking process.

In Israel, a small group of influential actors determine foreign policy, and groups try to affect these key decisionmakers.[131] As a liberal democracy, Israel's political leadership is forced to be responsive to a wide range of interest groups. Furthermore, Israeli political system provides various avenues through which these groups can limit or assist in determining the nation's foreign policy. Israeli foreign policy then is dependent upon the impact of key groups that define the environment in which political leaders operate. An understanding of the most influential groups in Israel is therefore necessary for an analysis of foreign policies ultimately formulated.[132]

Israel has a flourishing civil society with numerous interest groups that function throughout the range of national public and political opinion. The Histadrut, Peace Now, Dor Shalom, Gush Shalom, and Mateh Ha'rov are among the most significant groups that encourage the peace process with the Palestinians. While Gush Emunim, the Yesha Council, and Women in Green comprise some of the most powerful examples of those supporting the idea of Greater Israel.

1. Histadrut

The Histadrut is a workers' organization dedicated to the pursuit of Zionist goals and the exclusive employment of Jewish workers in Israel. The Histadrut has always backed settlement within the context of a peace agreement. The group supports the government's foreign policy, although it is unhappy with the size of the defense budget and sees large military spending as a burden to Israel's economy. Therefore, the

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[130] "The Danger at Home," *Ha'aretz,* (May 5, 2004).
http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/objects/pages/PrintArticleEn.jhtml?itemNo=423685, May 2004.
[131] Asher Arian, *The Second Republic: Politics in Israel*, 279, 282.
[132] R. D. McLaurin, *Foreign policy making in the Middle East: Domestic influences on policy in Egypt, Iraq, Israel, and Syria*, 169.

Histadrut leans more towards accommodation in regards to the settlements than either the wider population or government coalitions.[133]

2. Peace Now

Peace Now is one of the most recognized, active, and largest, interest groups in Israel. According to their website, "Peace Now is a movement of Israeli citizens who view peace, compromise and reconciliation with the Palestinians people…as the only guarantee for the future, the security, and the character of the State of Israel."[134] Peace Now aims to put a stop to Israeli militant occupation of the West Bank and Gaza and proposes the establishment of a Palestinian state.[135] Since Oslo, the movement has supported governments with a "land for peace" position. Currently, Peace Now leaders support Prime Minister Sharon's withdrawal plan, even over negotiations.[136]

However, the movement has mobilized against governments that have hindered the peace process and has coordinated its protests with political parties. Peace Now has close ties with leading doves in Labor and their activists have been very involved in supporting the party's election campaigns. The movement has also succeeded in getting its own members elected to the Knesset on lists of Labor and other parties.[137]

3. Dor Shalom and Gush Shalom

Dor Shalom was founded in the mid-1990s in the aftermath of Prime Minister Rabin's assassination. It is a non-partisan group advocating peace with the Palestinians to create a just, tolerant and democratic Jewish state. Dor Shalom's resources come from contributions as well as professional fundraising. In 1998, its membership constituted more than 25,000 Israelis.[138]

Gush Shalom's political views are three fold: immediate withdrawal of all settlers and the IDF from territories occupied since 1967, the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital, and Israeli admission of guilt for

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[133] Ibid., 209.

[134] http://www.peacenow.org.il/site/en/homepage.asp?pi=25, October 2004.

[135] Michael M. Laskier, "Israeli Activism American-Style: Civil Liberties, Environmental and Peace Organizations," *Israel Studies* 5:1 (2000). http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/israel_studies/v005/5.1laskier.html

[136] Neve Gordon, "The Militarist and Messianic Ideologies," *Middle East Report Online* (July 8, 2004). http://www.merip.org/mero/mero070804.html

[137] Uri Ben-Eliezer, "The Meaning of Political Participation in a Nonliberal Democracy: The Israeli Experience," *Comparative Politics* 25:4 (1993): 407.

[138] Michael M. Laskier, "Israeli Activism American-Style: Civil Liberties, Environmental and Peace Organizations."

tragedy experienced by Palestinian refugees and recognizing in principle the right of return.[139]   Gush Shalom believes these terms will allow for both parties to reach a peaceful solution.

4.   Mateh Ha'rov

One of the rising stars in Israel's current peace movement is Mateh Ha'rov (Coalition of the Majority) and combines members from other tents in the peace camp such as Peace Now, Labor, Histadrut, kibbutz, and leftist youth organizations. Some dissention exists within the group over whether a unilateral step towards peace is putting the best foot forward. Though they have agreed on an interim solution best summarized by their umbrella slogan, "Get out of Gaza and Begin to Talk."[140] The most remarkable achievement of this new movement was the organization of a demonstration in May 2004 at Rabin Square in Tel Aviv. The rally was a response to the Likud rejection of Prime Minister Sharon's Gaza disengagement plan and was attended by more than 150,000 peaceniks.

5.   Gush Emunim

Gush Emunim, literally "bloc of the faithful," is an interest group of religious professing and practicing Jews. They believe Jews should hold the land of Israel without remorse or self-doubt as they did in Old Testament times. Gush Emunim is on the front lines of those fighting to expand Israeli settlements and control over the territories. The movement's success and effectiveness in the political sphere can be attributed to focusing on a sole policy issue – the borders of Israel. Gush Emunim is among the most resourceful, determined, and efficient pressure groups in Israeli politics.[141]   They maintain strong ties with Likud, reinforcing each other's political goals. Through such means, Gush Emunim has gained significant access into Israeli foreign policy.

Religious jargon alone is insufficient to justify the settlements and occupation of the territories to a largely secular Israeli society.   Therefore, Gush Emunim has incorporated modern secular, national, and militaristic rhetoric into their messianic ideology to transform the collective Israeli consciousness.   This has added to the

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[139] Ibid.

[140] "Background/Israel's new peace groups – a field guide," *Ha'aretz,* (June 16, 2004). http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/objects/pages/PrintArticleEn.jhtml?itemNo=439899, June 2004.

[141] Gideon Aran, "Jewish Zionist Fundamentalism: the Bloc of the Faithful in Israel (Gush Emunim)," 295.

movement's political and cultural power to realize its mission of controlling Great Israel. The integration of a sweeping array of ideals also benefited Sharon's aspirations in broadening the constituency supporting him at the ballot box.[142]

6.   Yesha Council

The Yesha Council represents Israeli settlers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and many consider it the most powerful pressure group in Israeli politics. The Yesha Council's political leverage far outweighs its size in society, and a large number of Knesset members are sympathetic to its cause.[143] The Israeli government recognizes the Yesha Council as a force to be reckoned with. For example, it de-legitimized the government in its efforts during Oslo II. Yesha Council organized anti-government demonstrations and cooperated with opposition parties to portray the peace process as abandoning Israel's most precious interests and values.[144] Consequently, today Yesha Council leadership is able to schedule meetings with political elites (for example, with both the Public Security Minister and Defense Minister in recent months) giving them direct access to policymaking in Israel.[145]

7.   Women in Green

Women for Israel's tomorrow (Women in Green) was founded in 1993 and ever since has been one of the most rapidly growing grassroots movements in Israeli society. The organization consists of women who share love, devotion, and concern for Israel. Women in Green's sole concern is that Israel remain a Jewish state. Though they are not affiliated with any political party, they organize public demonstrations, advertise in newspapers, and provide lectures to educate the electorate on the consequences of Israel's foreign policy regarding Palestinians.[146]

Women in Green has always been vocal, but has increasingly been in the public spotlight ever since Prime Minister Sharon announced his plan to withdraw from Gaza and parts of the West Bank earlier this year. Recently government authorities have reported a spike in extremist remarks and threats of violence. Women in Green is partly

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[142] Neve Gordon, "The Militarist and Messianic Ideologies."

[143] Ibid.

[144] Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov, "Peace-Making with the Palestinians: Change and Legitimacy," 177.

[145] Nadev Shragai "Settler Leaders Warn of National 'Catastrophe and Division," *Ha'aretz,* (September 21, 2004). http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/objects/pages/PrintArticleEn.jhtml?itemNo=479566, October 2004.

[146] http://www.womeningreen.org/, October 2004.

responsible. In a June 2004 media release, Ruth Matar co-founder of this right-wing movement called Prime Minister Sharon "one of the most dangerous men for the survival of Israel." She argues that "Sharon is caving in to Arab terror and joining forces to realize the fondest dreams of the Arabs, namely to drive the Jewish people out of their Promised Land." Matar slung further insults to undermine the premier's foreign policy by calling him "a lackey of foreign powers, instead of fighting for the interests of his own people."[147]

Another highly publicized incident occurred in September 2004, when a criminal investigation was launched into remarks made by Nadia Matar, also co-chairman of Women in Green. She is suspected of comparing Israel's preparations to pull out of Gaza to the acts of Nazi Germany. Matar said, "I will continue to scream out against this plan which essentially is giving in to the Arab-Nazi enemy and presents a danger for the state of Israel."[148]

D.   PUBLIC OPINION

Two weeks after some 60,000 Likud Party members voted against Prime Minister Sharon's withdrawal plan from Gaza in May 2004, 150,000 Israelis packed Rabin Square in Tel Aviv, appealing to the government to move forward with the pullout.[149] This is a clear cut example that goes to the very core of contrasting Israeli opinions today. With fresh international endeavors by the U.S. and Europe to reinvigorate the Israeli-Palestinian peace process (The Quartet Roadmap), pressure is mounting within Israel.[150] Domestic developments place tremendous pressure on Israel to reconsider its relationship to the Palestinians and determine the acceptable risks for peace.

Polls provide a mapping of public opinion, and public opinion can influence policy as leaders try to make decisions that will preserve or enhance their image. The following section will examine Israeli survey results on specific issues pertaining to the

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[147] Ruth Matar, "The Jews Must Get Rid of Sharon Before Sharon Gets Rid of the Jews," (Jerusalem: June 10, 2004). http://www.womeningreen.org/sayjune04.htm, October 2004.

[148] Yaakov Katz, "'Women in Green' head investigated for incitement," *The Jerusalem Post Online Edition* (September 28, 2004). http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=Jpost/JPArticle/ShowFull&cid=1096344045499&p=1078027574097, October 2004.

[149] Neve Gordon, "The Militarist and Messianic Ideologies."

[150] Asher Arian, "Israeli Public Opinion on National Security 2003," 11.

country's foreign policy, namely: security, the settlements, unilateral withdrawal from the territories, establishment of a Palestinian state, and attitudes toward the peace process.

Israeli society exhibits symptoms of weariness towards the protracted conflict with the Palestinians and is increasingly concerned about security. In 2002, 42% thought Arabs wanted to kill as many Jews as possible, and an additional 26% thought they wanted to destroy the state of Israel – combined totaling 68%. Furthermore, Israelis were more concerned for their personal safety as well as the nations, with 92% expressing fear that they, or a family member would sufferer a terrorist attack.[151] As evidenced by the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin and the suicide bombings that many attribute to Netanyahu's success in 1996, terrorism has weakened the sense of security. Calls for moderation are hushed by cries for security, thus weakening support for conciliatory attitudes.[152] For instance, when Operation Defensive Shield was launched by the IDF in March 2002 to attack the Palestinian terror infrastructure, it was widely approved by the Israeli public--even in the pro-peace camp.

Jewish settlements in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip are a major bone of contention in contemporary Israeli society. Historically many Israelis have been somewhat indifferent to the settlements. Yet, by 2003 most were clearly unsympathetic. A clear majority favored a freezing of the settlements and 70% believed the government should use aggressive measures against Jewish extremists refusing to leave. In fact, 53% thought the government was not being tough enough on the settlers. Data showed 63% of Israelis are ready to trade most of the settlements in West Bank and Gaza for a peace agreement with the Palestinians.[153]

The recent trend in Israeli opinion has moved toward separation to make defending the border easier and as a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Not only has there been a rise in support for a unilateral withdrawal from the territories – the scales have tipped. In 2003, 56% of Israelis backed the notion of separating from the Palestinians via a unilateral withdrawal, even if it meant abandoning the settlements. This opinion was up from 48% in 2002.[154]

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[151] Ibid., 9, 20.
[152] Myron J. Aronoff, "The Americanization of Israeli Politics and Realignment of the Party System," 115.
[153] Cameron S. Brown, "Israel's 2003 Elections: A Victory for the Moderate Right and Secular Center."
[154] Asher Arian, "Israeli Public Opinion on National Security 2003." 9.

While public expectations have changed an acceptance of policy alternatives has developed. A two-state solution is no longer an untouchable subject in Israeli politics.[155] Public opinion polls in 1999 showed that 69% thought a Palestinian state was inevitable, and what's more – 55% of Israelis said the Palestinians deserve sovereignty.[156] In 2003, 59% preferred the establishment of a Palestinian state if it would render a peace agreement.[157]

The fact that 82% of the public backed Netanyahu's first meeting with Yasir Arafat, and 80% favored continuing negotiations with the Palestinians signifies that Israelis have undergone a paradigm shift in their view of the peace process and want policy to advance it.[158] By 2003, 56% of the Israeli public chose focusing on peace talks, while 44% preferred the use of military might as the best policy to deter Palestinian violence. Similarly, Israeli society had become more optimistic about the peace process. Only 54% thought a peace agreement with the Palestinians was out of reach, compared to 68% in 2002.[159]

An important statistic to U.S. policymakers involved Israeli views towards participation by outside partners. Albeit a small majority, 52% felt a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could not be reached through third party intervention, that the parties must work it out themselves. Unfortunately 68% were against the U.S. imposing an agreement on the parties, although at least a decline from 80% in 2002. Despite the two opinions above, some good news can be found in that 66% trusted American guarantees of security.[160]

E.   MEDIA

One of the fundamental principles of a democracy is that its people must have the freedom to deliberate over important current affairs. The Israeli media has become the central stage for internal debates over Palestinian policy, and their coverage encourages public discussion. The debate takes place in news stories, editorials, talks shows, and the

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[155] Asher Arian, "Israeli Public Opinion on National Security 2002." (Tel Aviv University: Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, July 2002), 22. http://www.tau.ac.il/jcss/memoranda/memo61.pdf
[156] Myron J. Aronoff, "The Americanization of Israeli Politics and Realignment of the Party System," 112.
[157] Asher Arian, "Israeli Public Opinion on National Security 2003," 9.
[158] Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov, "Peace-Making with the Palestinians: Change and Legitimacy," 184.
[159] Asher Arian, "Israeli Public Opinion on National Security 2003," 10.
[160] Ibid., 10.

entertainment media.[161] It is important to note that Israel is a news-captivated society, proven by data on subscription levels to newspapers and ratings for television and radio news programs.[162] Therefore, the media can be considered a domestic access point into foreign policy formation as it shapes how issues are portrayed.

One prevalent illustration of a domestic media source with influence on politicians and the pubic alike is *Ha'aretz. Ha'aretz* is an independent daily newspaper with liberal coverage of Israeli domestic issues and international affairs. The paper plays a substantial part in forming public opinion and is closely read by those in the government's decisionmaking circles. Many of the writers hail from senior military and political backgrounds and are respected as coming from an informed position. As a result, they are taken seriously and trusted by their earlier colleagues and keep close personal ties with Israel's leaders.[163] The paper is perhaps most popular for its Op-ed section. One such article shows the media framing how an issue is perceived:

> The Gaza settlements are the height of absurdity, hubris of outrageous dimensions. Despite all the billions that have been invested in the area, only 7,500 Jews live in 20 isolated venues and have no chance of surviving without an enormous military presence protecting them. It's a brutal occupation that has given a third of the land including water resources, to those 7,500 people, while 1.3 million Arabs live on 65 percent of the land in terribly overcrowded conditions and horrifying poverty. This occupation threatens the existence of the state. Every reasonable person understands that the situation cannot go on forever without some terrible explosion.[164]

The media is involved in several levels of the foreign policymaking process. Political elites take the media into account when they form their policy. The media creates an environment where foreign policy related events are portrayed in an agenda-setting light. This affects decisionmakers and in turn obliges them to respond in the media. Also, the media can serve as a mobilizing force when reporters notify the public

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[161] Gadi Wolfsfeld, "The News Media and Peace Processes: The Middle East and Northern Ireland," *United States Institute of Peace*, Peaceworks No. 37 (January 2001): 26.
http://www.usip.org/pubs/peaceworks/pwks37.html

[162] Asher Arian, *The Second Republic: Politics in Israel*, 74.

[163] R. D. McLaurin, *Foreign policy making in the Middle East: Domestic influences on policy in Egypt, Iraq, Israel, and Syria*, 196.

[164] "The Danger at Home," *Ha'aretz.*

of foreign policy-related news, and journalists provide commentary and analysis. [165] Therefore, the media is a domestic constituency. Two schools of thought exist when it comes to the character of the media's influence on the peace process: supportive and destructive.

The first position is captured by Chanan Naveh, who describes the media with potential to benefit the peace process. In a mobilizing function, the media recruits support for the government - critical during the pursuit of peace. Political leadership can use the press to build consensus for their policies. Therein, the media's role as a promoter of policy debates can sway public opinion in favor of advancing the peace process. However, Naveh admits the media can also act against a government trying to improve Israeli-Palestinian relations.[166]

Gadi Wolfsfeld agrees the news media is central to the peace process, yet in a detrimental manner. A lasting peace needs time to develop; yet the media demands immediate results. Similarly, peace has the best chance of success in a calm environment, however the press feeds off of violence and turmoil. Peace processes consist of long complicated negotiations, often requiring strict discretion. Opponents to peace can then fill the silence by replacing the excitement the media lacks from government sources.[167]

Since Oslo, media coverage of every terrorist attack has perpetuated the argument that giving into the Palestinians results in added violence. For instance, in 1995 after civilian Israelis were killed by Hamas and Islamic Jihad, the media indulged in "marathons of mourning" of around-the-clock call in shows, constant playing of gloomy music, and vivid funeral exposure. It is extraordinarily challenging to pursue long-term policy in such an intensely emotional atmosphere. Israelis demanded the government "do something." Calls for revenge against the Palestinians sounded as support for the peace process fell to a whisper. Another example of the media thwarting the peace process was in 2000 after the failure of Camp David to result in an agreement. The media portrayed Palestinians as murderous terrorists and caused Israelis to view them as dishonest negotiating partners. The media tends to sensationalize events to serve their monetary

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[165] Chanan Naveh, "The Role of the Media in Foreign Policy Decision-Making: A Theoretical Framework," *Conflict & Communication* online, Vol. 1, No. 2 (2002): 1,6. www.cco.regener-online.de
[166] Ibid., 10.
[167] Gadi Wolfsfeld, "The News Media and Peace Processes: The Middle East and Northern Ireland," 5, 43.

interests, which unfortunately has a negative impact on an already problematic peace process.[168]

F.   CONCLUSION

Any Israeli government wishing to promote a peace agreement to greater society will have to not only deal with how the policy will strengthen security, but its implications on the national identity.[169] Despite one's personal views, not a single Israeli can escape the demographic facts. Both advocates and opponents of a withdrawal policy must accept that Jewish settlement in the territories is quickly reaching a critical juncture. [170] Therefore, it is important to ascertain which elements in Israeli society have the most access to the foreign policymaking process. The constituents with the least impact are communal groups, public opinion, and the media. The most significant components are certain subcultures, which in turn usually participate in correlated right-wing interest groups.

The different communal groups are a bloc of which the policymaker need be aware. They are fairly segregated and generally share the same political outlooks as a community with certain circumstances that bind them together. However, it does not appear any of the communal groups have forcefully tried to influence Palestinian policy as a group.

With respect to public opinion, one question is outstanding – why doesn't it have any influence?! One would think in a democracy, if the majority of Israelis want to make peace with the Palestinians, the government would have to submit to the will of the people. A possible explanation is that policymakers have mainly sought to marshal public opinion in support of policies only after they are made, instead of looking to public opinion for direction.[171]

In 2000, as the Hizbullah attacks on Israeli troops in Lebanon ranged on and death tolls mounted, the domestic cry for immediate unilateral withdrawal grew louder and louder. Eventually Prime Minister Barak was forced to respond to public demands and

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[168] Ibid., 22-24,42-43.

[169] Michael Barnett, "The Israeli Identity and the Peace Process: Re/creating the Un/thinkable," 60.

[170] Asher Arian, "Israeli Public Opinion on National Security 2003," 12.

[171] R. D. McLaurin, *Foreign policy making in the Middle East: Domestic influences on policy in Egypt, Iraq, Israel, and Syria*, 194.

brought the IDF home.[172] Here public opinion directly changed policy. The prospect worth contemplating is, given the public opinion presented above, will Sharon be compelled to follow suit and proceed with his unilateral disengagement plan from Gaza and parts of the West Bank? Or maybe the Israeli public will get so frustrated with the Right after failed attempts to move forward in the peace process they will vote in a new government that will adhere to and accommodate the desires of the majority.

Regarding the two arguments about the impact of the media on foreign policy in Israel, the side that portrays the media as a negative factor is more plausible. The media by nature perpetuates conflict. It also molds public opinion as it shapes how policies are relayed. It is important for policymakers to develop better plans to consider and relate to the media when they make decisions and consider promulgating foreign policy.

The various subcultures within Israel can sometimes be involved in decisionmaking. Secular Jews are driven by concerns over the economy, human rights, demographics, and security. As such a diversified group, secular Jews have found it difficult to mobilize, hence their political influence has remained limited. The religious-nationalists, as previously discussed in Chapter III, are active in the IDF and therefore civil-military relations giving them a degree of access to policy formulation. They also hold strong political convictions, which make any benefits Israel might gain from a peace agreement an insufficient tradeoff to a group wholly committed to Jewish control over the West Bank and East Jerusalem. [173] The settler subculture is one of the most potent forces in determining Israeli-Palestinian policy. The fact that the settlers have still been able to dominate Israel's policymaking process—even when public opinion favors a withdrawal from the territories and advancing the peace process—makes it appear that no peace movement can overcome their political clout.[174] The haredim are showing a growing interest in foreign policy and their thriving participation in Israeli politics certainly give them access to policy outputs. More recently the haredim lack unity in their approach to Palestinian issues, though mainly still believe the territories hold religious value.

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[172] Yoram Peri, "The Israeli Military and Israel's Palestinian Policy: From Oslo to the Al Aqsa Intifada," 32.

[173] Clive Jones and Emma C. Murphy, *Israel: Challenges to Identity, Democracy, and the State*, 125.

[174] "The Danger at Home," *Ha'aretz.*

Interest groups in Israel are flourishing; in terms of whether they have an input, it varies. The Histadrut is certainly a major player in domestic economic policy. However, Organized Labor's track record suggests they refrain from getting involved in foreign policy, though this could possibly change if a particular policy had a direct adverse impact. With the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa Intifada (2000 to present), support for Peace Now has fizzed out. Dor Shalom and Gush Shalom appear to be in more of supportive role than as headlining the peace movement. Mateh Ha'rov is too new to fully evaluate the magnitude of their input on foreign policy. But, the May 2004 peace demonstration they organized rallying over a hundred thousand Israelis is certainly a respectable accomplishment. If it can sustain a similar level of activity and transform it into direct political persuasion, the emerging movement's influence could be substantial.

Interest groups associated with the right are much more influential. Gush Emunim and the Yesha Council are without question very involved in Israeli decisionmaking, both within and outside the political system. They are the most fervent pursuers of their policy positions to political elites. Even though they only comprise a small percentage of the population, they have a large amount of input on issues relating to the Palestinians. Sharon's plan to unilaterally dismantle the settlements and withdraw the troops that protect them is clearly guided by the idea of Greater Israel. However, Sharon's vision is founded in terms of security, not the messianic beliefs of Gush Emunim. For a long time in Israel "these two ideologies overlapped. But presently they are diverging, and could pose a threat to the settlers' hegemony."[175] Women in Green have a high profile, massive efforts to further their cause, and as evidenced by the investigation mentioned earlier – are taken seriously by the government. They have considerable potential for contribution in foreign policy.

An extremely interesting phenomenon is that the right-wing interest groups are always taken into the fold during a Likud government. However, the peace movements do not enjoy the same status when Labor leads Israel. It is unclear exactly why this occurs, but undoubtedly has a tremendous impact on Palestinian related issues. Perhaps the Right has more staying power than the peace-camp because they are more radicalized, driven, and unified.

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[175] Neve Gordon, "The Militarist and Messianic Ideologies."

The evaluation of all the members that make up Israeli society is vital in building a comprehensive representation of the domestic drivers influencing the nation's foreign policy today. This study brought to light which were most important, and why. Since some of the findings were counterintuitive, it is helpful for U.S. policymakers to be familiar with Israeli beliefs, rationale, and motivations. Given the discoveries of significant actors in Israeli society—as well as the political sphere and civil-military relations—an overall ranking of the three areas combined will be presented in the following chapter. Additionally, recommendations for U.S policymakers will be offered pertaining to what was learned about driving forces in Israel for promoting the peace process with the Palestinians.

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V.   CONCLUSION

Yasir Arafat's recent death opened a window of opportunity to advance the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Since Arafat's passing, there has been cooperation between the Palestinian Authority and Israel. They plan to continue working together towards PA elections and the Israeli pullout from Gaza in 2005. Newfound hope exists that these fresh circumstances will jumpstart the stalled road map.

All the components discussed in the previous chapters of this thesis were needed to ascertain the most important domestic access points to Israel's foreign policy formation. Israel's political arena, military, and society overlap and interact immensely in this regard. A look into Israel's political system showed the relative importance of elections, political parties, the Knesset, coalitions, and the prime minister. Focusing on the IDF and civil-military relations in Israel demonstrated: national security concerns dictate foreign policy, the significance of different Palestinian policy views within the military, the growing role of the defense establishment government decisionmaking, the influence of retired officers entering politics, and highlighted conflict between military and political elites. An examination of Israeli society illustrated the power of communal groups and subcultures, interest groups, the media, and clearly identified the heartbeat of Israeli opinion. A great deal has been learned though the presentation in earlier chapters of all these internal issues and their bearing on Israel's relations with the Palestinians and had to be covered to discover which elements were most dominant.

The point of this conclusion is to clarify what was learned, to ascertain which domestic drivers are more important than others, and why. The major takeaway from this analysis is the resulting combined ranking of all three areas. In descending order the list of most influential factors are: smaller parties and coalition structure, the prime minister, the defense establishment, and right of center interest groups. It should be noted this ranking is artificial. It is based solely on the author's interpretation of the research and analysis in this thesis.

Small parties and in a related manner coalition structure rank highest in level of input to foreign policymaking. Smaller parties are more coherent and unified in their foreign policy focus than the traditional larger ones. It is these small parties, in the

dynamics of a parliamentary system, that are able to make bold moves in coalition politics. The structure of coalitions allows these smaller parties to hold the vitality of the government in the balance and therefore pressure for their foreign policy stances to be followed. Therefore, small extreme parties control what the prime minister is able to do in the Palestinian peace process.

The prime minister is supreme in certain circumstances and therefore ranks as the second most influential domestic player in Israel's foreign policymaking. In issues not requiring a Knesset vote or treaties, the premier has the final word in matters of foreign policy. There are additional circumstances where the prime minister is supreme. For instance, when the budget vote is far off he has more room to maneuver without threat of the Knesset stalling to approve it. When a budget vote is near, the prime minister has to focus energy on getting it passed which takes energy away from foreign policy measures. Another circumstance where the prime minister is in a strong position is when he has the backing of the cabinet. The cabinet is made up of his own party, other coalition party leaders, and senior military officers. If the executive has the support of policy stances in the cabinet—and in turn the constituencies they lead—he is in a strong enough position to push forward with foreign policy initiatives. Outside these parameters the prime minister is limited by other domestic players in shaping which policy approaches Israel pursues. The prime minister has commanding, yet not ultimate authority.

The military has the most impact on foreign policy as an opinion constituency. Even though the IDF obeys orders from civilian origins, it can still articulate views different from the government. For instance, the Chief of Staff can make public commentary on policy that opens up an avenue for influence though effecting public opinion, though this is extremely hard to quantify. Also, dissent in civil-military relations over foreign policy positions can be problematic when the military always serves as a contributor in foreign policy formation. Imagine a scenario where the IDF, who heavily participates in Israel's decisionmaking apparatus, were to advocate a certain position based upon their best judgment that was in direct contrast to that of the civilian leadership. The government depends on the military for input on national security concerns when charting the coarse for foreign policy. If the two are in disagreement over the optimal policy approach the waters can become quite murky.

For all the publicity they get, one might think interest groups get top billing in the policymaking process. Yet, only right of center interest groups tend to have an impact on foreign policy, albeit indirectly. Labor need not heed the demands of left of center interest groups—they are a captive audience. On the other hand, Likud must be very responsive to interest groups on the right because it does not have a monopoly on this segment of society. If Likud chooses to ignore the policy preferences of say Women in Green or the Yesha Council, these groups can take their support to United Torah Judaism or the National Religious Party. Another point to take into account however is that mobilization does not equal direct input into foreign policy. Interest groups may rally Israeli public opinion, but because of Israel's system of government, the influence of the population on foreign policy stops after casting the ballot.

These findings hold wider relevance. For one, the same theory that domestic factors influence Israel's Palestinian policy can also be applied to broader Israeli foreign policy contexts. For example, domestic influence clearly played a huge role in Israel's pullout from Lebanon. Other possibilities are the Syrian peace track, which has been an area of contention for decades, as well as relations with other Arab neighbors.

The findings of this thesis can be further used in studying foreign policy in a number of other scenarios. For states that are small, yet highly populated, going through democratic consolidation with parliamentary systems in an environment infused with foreigners and entrenched in conflict – domestic components significantly impact foreign policy behavior. In cases like these, international frameworks are not the best means to understand such states because they may not act as national actors, but as a result of domestic pressures. To summarize, for Israel and other similar states, foreign policy measures are victims of domestic political structures.

The United States has a close relationship with Israel, and with this support comes the potential to impact our ally. Therefore a thorough understanding of Israel by U.S. policymakers is of the utmost importance. This thesis meets the vital need to gain an internal perspective as to what makes Israel tick. By understanding Israel's domestic drivers in foreign policy, U.S. policymakers can better understand how to shape the U.S.-Israel relationship to advance the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. This will in turn

compliment U.S objectives throughout the Middle East and improve American sentiment in the region.

Although the purpose of this chapter was to delineate the most significant domestic access points to Israeli foreign policy, it will go one step further. With the above ranking some recommendations can be made for U.S. policy regarding Israel. First, U.S. policy in reference to Israeli-Palestinian relations must be coherent and of common vision among the President, legislature, and cabinet: to promote the peace process. Only then will any of the following suggestions have the possibility of success. Also, it must be understood that even when the goal of the U.S. policymaking elite is to get countries to do what they want them to, it is extremely difficult to influence countries from the outside. Therefore, all of these recommendations will have limited influence. These recommendations will aim—depending on the appropriate situation—to convince, constrain, or influence elements within Israel to do what is most productive in moving forward in the peace process with the Palestinians, which simultaneously serves U.S. objectives in the Middle East.

There are a few ideas pertaining to smaller parties in Israel. As shown previously, smaller parties in the ruling coalition are the real ones pulling the strings in Israel's behavior. American embassies or envoys need to up the ante on their engagement of the parliamentary and cabinet representation of small parties, as opposed to the majority party (which is more instinctual). Inviting small party leaders to the United States in order to have an effect on their operations can do this. The U.S. should also be smarter about deciding which small party initiatives to support and give money to. Perhaps the biggest lesson derived from the understanding of coalition politics is for the U.S. to time diplomatic initiatives in congruence with the cycle of coalition formation. Since small parties have so much sway in the coalition and therein policy, better to connect with them before the coalition is put together.

The initial recommendation for U.S. policymakers in regards to the Israeli prime minister is to determine if he is the right man to serve American interests. If so, they need to strengthen him. This can be accomplished through supporting the cabinet and Knesset members from his party. Frequent and high level visits with these players will promote appearances and garner support within the premier's party and the electorate.

The U.S. embassy in Tel-Aviv should praise the prime minister and guarantee the success of his initiatives. By making such gestures, the U.S. can help show the Israeli people that it is worthwhile to support the prime minister and his Palestinian policy initiatives. However, if the U.S. finds the prime minister is not the best person for their goals, the same mechanisms (cabinet, Knesset, electorate) can be employed to weaken him and at the same time strengthen his opponent. For example, the U.S. should hold meetings to pursue other parties and potential leaders.

Recommendations for the military involve reaching out to the IDF. The military is an advocacy group with the civilian electorate and politicians. The U.S. should invite young officers to America for education, for instance to the Naval Postgraduate School. Experiences in the U.S. and relationships built will shape their views down the line when they hold the elite positions of power. Similarly, the U.S. should invite more senior IDF officers to the National Defense University. The association of current and future Israeli military leaders with America will open access points for U.S. influence. Additionally, the U.S. should coordinate our policies with military aid offered to Israel. While doing so, the U.S. must show the IDF we understand Israel's strategic predicament and then work to couple it with our own desires. These efforts will nudge the IDF as a corporate force in America's direction.

Foreign interest groups are hard to control, but there are some recommendations for U.S. policymakers. The U.S. should not have their representatives in Israel meet with the far right interest groups or lend them legitimacy. On the same note, aid should not be provided to these groups to support their operations, which are counterproductive in the Palestinian peace process. Also, the same groups or movements should be shut out here. U.S. policymakers should not speak out in favor of far right interest groups. Furthermore, propaganda campaigns in the U.S. should be closely followed, as Israeli interest groups preventing wider Israeli desires should not even be given a podium in America.

All the aforementioned recommendations are a group of tools at the United State's disposal. Like all building projects, multiple tools must be utilized to make progress. These recommendations cannot be implemented in isolation, but must be applied in combination with each other. Even with the policy suggestions made above,

ultimately U.S. influence will always be limited, because as this thesis proves—domestic drivers in Israel are vitally fundamental to foreign policy.

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